



Approved:
Chief Marcia Harnden

Subject:

610. Property and Evidence

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610.1: PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy provides for the proper collection, storage, and security of evidence and other property. Additionally, this policy provides for the protection of the chain of evidence and those persons authorized to remove and/or destroy property.

610.2: DEFINITIONS

Property – Includes all items of evidence, items taken for safekeeping and found property.

Recovered Property – Includes items recovered in the course of an investigation that will be retained as evidence.

Evidence – Includes items taken in the course of an investigation that may be used in the prosecution of a case. This includes physical forms of digital media.

Safekeeping – Includes the following types of property:

- Property obtained by the Department for safekeeping
- Personal property of an arrestee not taken as evidence
- Property taken as a courtesy to the owner

Found Property – Includes property found by an employee or citizen that has no apparent evidentiary value and where the owner cannot be readily identified, contacted, or is unable to pick up in a timely manner.

610.3: POLICY

It is the policy of the Albany Police Department to ensure that evidence and property collected and stored are handled in accordance with law and best practices.

610.4: PROPERTY HANDLING

- a. Any employee who first comes into possession of evidence should retain such property in their control until it is properly tagged and placed in the designated property locker or storage room.
 - 1) Control of evidence can be designated to other sworn members when needed for entry into evidence. A supplemental report shall be written to reflect the chain of custody.
 - 2) Care shall be taken to maintain the chain of custody for all evidence.
- b. Collection and handling of all evidence and property should follow the guidelines established by the [State of Oregon Physical Evidence Manual](#) and the [Albany Police Department Property and Evidence Manual](#).
- c. To ensure the safety and security of department members, and the integrity of evidence stored in the property room, all closed containers will be opened for inventory purposes prior to booking into a property locker including perishable food items, wallets, purses, coin purses, fanny packs, personal organizers, backpacks, briefcases, or other closed containers capable of carrying money, valuables, sharps, weapons, drugs, ammunition, or hazardous materials.
 - 1) Any of these items found will be packaged separately, appropriately identified, and stored, or disposed of, according to the Property and Evidence Manual.
 - 2) Any food items that cannot immediately be returned to the property owner will be discarded or destroyed.
 - 3) Lighters, matches, and other small ignition devices that cannot immediately be returned to the property owner will be discarded or destroyed.
- d. Employees will provide a receipt for all items of property that are received or taken from any person. If no person is present, and the property is removed from private property or a vehicle, the employee will leave a receipt prominently placed on or in the private property or the vehicle.
 - 1) The property receipt shall be signed by the property owner unless the signature refusal or not present box is marked.
- e. Where ownership can be established for found property with no apparent evidentiary value, such property may be released to the owner without the need for booking. Members will document the property release in the report or CAD call if the property was not entered into TRAQ.

610.4.1: PROPERTY BOOKING PROCEDURE

- a. All property and evidence collected shall be packaged and booked into the Property and Evidence Section according to the guidelines and procedures set forth in the Property and Evidence Manual prior to the end of the employee's shift, unless otherwise approved by a supervisor via the temporary locker log.

- b. It is the responsibility of the seizing officer to make a reasonable effort to identify and locate the owner of any found, recovered, or seized property. The officer shall document all obtained owner information or, if unsuccessful, clearly record the efforts made to identify and locate the owner including methods and resources used.
- c. License plates, driver licenses, identification cards, or other DMV produced items which are not stolen and have no evidentiary value shall be placed in the designated DMV mail slot in the Records Section to be returned to the Oregon Department of Motor Vehicles.
- d. All cash shall be counted in the presence of a supervisor and the currency bag shall be initialed both by the booking officer and the supervisor.
- e. City property, unless connected to a known criminal case, should be released directly to the appropriate City department, and need not go through the formal booking process, except in cases where no appropriate City employee can be located.
- f. Needles and syringes should not be submitted into the Property and Evidence Section and should be disposed of in an appropriate sharps container unless they are required for evidence in a serious crime or major investigation. In cases where they must be booked, needles and syringes shall be packaged in a syringe tube.

610.5: EXPLOSIVES AND HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES

- a. Explosives that are known or suspected to be armed or live, other than fixed ammunition, should not be retained in the police facility. All fireworks, railroad flares, or fuses that are considered safe should be transported to the Fire Department by the officer who seizes the item(s) and placed in the magazine for destruction. If items must be retained, they shall be stored in the Firebox located in the back parking lot.
 - 1) If placed in the magazine for destruction, the officer shall not enter the item in the TRAQ System but shall note the items for destruction in the report.
- b. Officers who encounter an explosive device shall immediately notify their immediate supervisor and/or the Shift Supervisor. The Bomb Squad will be called to handle situations involving explosive devices and all such devices will be released to them for disposal. In the event of military ordnance, the closest military unit shall be notified, and they will be responsible for removal of the device.
- c. Flammable liquids items containing gas, corrosive or caustic chemicals or other potentially hazardous materials may not be stored in the property room. In most cases, they should not be taken into custody unless they are required for a serious crime or major investigation. Disposal is the responsibility of the owner. If the substance is to be tested for evidentiary purposes, a small amount should be taken using supplied sample bottles, which should then be sealed in secondary containers.

610.6: DNA EVIDENCE

- a. Unless impractical to do so, officers should collect samples of all biological evidence that may reasonably be used to incriminate or exculpate any person as part of any criminal death investigation or a crime listed in [ORS 163A.005](#).
- b. The Property and Evidence Section will be responsible for ensuring that biological evidence is preserved in a manner that is sufficient to develop a DNA profile.

610.6.1: SEXUAL ASSAULT FORENSIC EVIDENCE (SAFE) KITS

- a. The Albany Police Department will collect and maintain the chain of custody for all Oregon State Police Sexual Assault Forensic Evidence Kits (SAFE Kits) and any associated evidence collected by medical facilities when the alleged crime(s) occurred in this jurisdiction for victims of sexual assault.
- b. If the alleged crime(s) occurred in another jurisdiction, the medical facility should contact that jurisdiction for the investigation, collection, and preservation.
 - 1) In the event another jurisdiction requests APD to collect items on their behalf, a patrol supervisor may approve the courtesy pick-up. The submitting officer shall indicate shipping instructions or agency contact in the TRAQ entry. If the other jurisdiction is unable to investigate, collect or preserve the evidence, the Albany Police Department will collect and preserve the evidence, but will only complete an investigation with supervisor's approval.
- c. For SAFE Kits collected at local medical facilities where no jurisdiction information is provided the Albany Police Department will collect and preserve the evidence. Under current law, victims of sexual assault may seek medical assessment and choose not to make a report to law enforcement, yet still have evidence collected and preserved. Victims who choose to remain anonymous and not make a report shall not be required to do so ([ORS 181A.325](#)).
- d. SAFE Kits from named victims shall normally be handled by the Operations Division, which shall assign an officer to ensure their proper investigation, collection, and preservation. When a medical facility notifies this department that evidence of a named victim sexual assault has been collected and a SAFE Kit is available, the assigned officer shall be responsible for the following:
 - 1) Respond within seven days to the medical facility to retrieve the evidence and investigate the incident ([ORS 181A.325](#)).
 - 2) Provide a unique case number to the victim along with the investigating officer's name and phone number.
 - 3) The department classification for identified victims should be the most serious crime alleged.
 - 4) Prepare and submit an Evidence Report, [OSP Forensic Services Request: Form A49](#), Sexual Assault Form, and book the evidence in accordance with procedures set forth in the Property and Evidence Manual.

- 5) Each SAFE kit has a serial number listed on the envelope that shall be entered into TRAQ under the serial number field.
- e. Anonymous SAFE Kits shall normally be handled by the Operations Division, which shall assign an officer to ensure their proper collection and preservation. When a medical facility notifies this department that evidence of a sexual assault has been collected and an anonymous SAFE Kit is available, Communications will provide a report number to a responsible representative of the medical facility, which will be provided to the victim. The report number will be used to identify all associated evidence so that a chain of evidence can be maintained in the event the victim later decides to report the assault. The department classification for anonymous victims should be "SAFE Kit." The assigned officer shall be responsible for the following:
- 1) Respond to the medical facility to retrieve the evidence. Collection of anonymous kits must occur within seven (7) days;
 - 2) Ensure that no identifying information regarding the victim, other than the case number, is visible on the evidence packaging;
 - 3) Prepare and submit an evidence report and book the evidence under a case number in accordance with procedures set forth in the Property and Evidence Manual;
 - 4) Each SAFE kit has a serial number listed on the envelope that shall be entered into TRAQ under the serial number field.
- f. Anonymous SAFE Kits shall be maintained in the same manner as other SAFE Kits but shall not be opened or submitted for testing until or unless the victim reports the assault. Opening SAFE Kits may compromise the admissibility of evidence in the event of a prosecution.
- g. The Property and Evidence Specialist is responsible for submitting SAFE Kits for identified victims for testing within 14 days after APD takes possession of the kit.
- h. A Property and Evidence Specialist or the case investigator will respond to the victim, or victim's designee (with written authorization), inquiries concerning SAFE Kits without unnecessary delay or within 30 days of the inquiry, unless the disclosure interferes with the investigation or prosecution of a case;
- 1) The investigator should provide victims with information concerning SAFE Kits including but not limited to, the location, testing date and testing results of a kit, whether a DNA sample was obtained from the kit, whether or not there are matches to DNA profiles in the state or federal databases and the estimated destruction of the kit.
- i. The Detective Sergeant or designee shall serve as the liaison between the Albany Police Department and the Department of State Police regarding contact with victims and providing victims with information concerning sexual assault forensic evidence kits. ([ORS 181A.325\(2\)](#))

610.6.2: RETENTION OF BIOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

- a. Biological evidence shall be preserved in accordance with [ORS 133.705 through 133.717](#).
- b. The Property and Evidence Specialist shall ensure that no biological evidence (as defined in [ORS 133.705\(3\)](#)) held by the Department is destroyed without permission from the District Attorney's office.
- c. Biological evidence shall be retained for a minimum period established by law ([ORS 133.707](#)) or the expiration of any sentence imposed related to the evidence, whichever time period is greater, with the exception of District Attorney permission per [ORS 133.709](#) for disposal.
- d. Biological evidence related to a homicide shall be retained indefinitely and may only be destroyed with the written approval of the head of the applicable prosecutor's office and the Chief of Police.
- e. Biological evidence related to an unsolved sexual assault shall not be disposed of prior to expiration of the statute of limitations. Even after expiration of the applicable statute of limitations, the Detective Sergeant should be consulted.
- f. All Sexual Assault Forensic Evidence Kits (SAFE Kits) shall be retained for no less than 60 years after the collection of the evidence.

610.7: PACKAGING OF PROPERTY

Employees shall package all property as outlined in the Property and Evidence Manual. All packages will be sealed with evidence tape or heat-sealed, barcoded, initialed, and dated across the seal. An officer's badge number is not acceptable for identification on property packages.

610.8: PROPERTY AND EVIDENCE RECORDING

- a. Property and Evidence Specialists and/or the Records and Systems Supervisor are responsible for the receiving, cataloging, and storage of property and evidence booked into the Property and Evidence Section by employees.
- b. Any changes in the location of property or evidence held by the Albany Police Department shall be documented in the Property and Evidence catalog system.

610.9: PROPERTY AND EVIDENCE SECTION SECURITY

- a. Access to the secured portion of the Property and Evidence Section should be limited to Property and Evidence Specialists, the Records and Systems Supervisor, and the Support Services Captain.
- b. Other visitors to the secured area of the Property and Evidence Section must be logged in and out, including date, time, and purpose of their entry.

- c. Visitors to the secured area of the Property and Evidence Section shall be accompanied by a Property and Evidence Specialist, the Records and Systems Supervisor, and/or the Support Services Captain.
- d. Periodic audits of the Property and Evidence Section shall be completed by the Records and Systems Supervisor and reports of those audits shall be forwarded to the Chief of Police.

610.10: CHAIN OF CUSTODY

- a. All employees coming into contact with property or evidence are responsible for ensuring that the property chain of custody is maintained and documented.
- b. Any employee needing to take custody of previously booked evidence for investigative purposes shall check the item out with the Property and Evidence Specialists and/or the Records and Systems Supervisor.
- c. Any evidence transferred to a crime laboratory for processing and examination shall be checked out of the Property and Evidence Section via the Property and Evidence Specialists or the Records and Systems Supervisor. The chain of custody of the evidence will be maintained in TRAQ, and the transferring employee will ensure appropriate documentation is made of the receipt of the evidence by the laboratory.

610.11: RELEASE OF PROPERTY

- a. The Property and Evidence Specialist shall send a courtesy notification letter to the rightful owner as noted in TRAQ and/or reports of property not needed for investigation.
- b. Found property not claimed within ninety (90) days is eligible for court ordered disposal of property ([ORS 133.623](#)) and will be auctioned, destroyed, or disposed of in accordance with these procedures and existing law.
- c. Property held for safekeeping will be held as a courtesy for at least sixty (60) days. During this time, the owner may retrieve the property upon verification of ownership. If the property is not retrieved within the sixty-day period, it shall be subject to disposal, transfer, or other administrative action.
- d. Property may be released to a verified owner at the discretion of the Property and Evidence Specialists without further authorization.
 - 1) A Property and Evidence Specialist or the Records and Systems Supervisor shall release the property upon proper identification being presented by the owner or their designee for which an authorized release has been received.
 - 2) A signature of the person receiving the property shall be recorded in the evidence system or on a hard copy form which is placed in the case file.

610.11.1: DISPUTED CLAIMS TO PROPERTY

In cases where the ownership of property held by this Department is under dispute, parties should be advised that their claims are civil in nature and property shall not be released until one party has obtained a valid court order or other undisputed right to the property.

610.11.2: DISPOSITION OF PROPERTY

- a. All property not held for evidence in a pending criminal investigation or proceeding and held for ninety (90) days or longer (60 days or more, plus 30 days after notice), where the owner has not been located or fails to claim the property, may be disposed of in compliance with existing laws upon receipt of proper authorization for disposal. ([ORS 133.623](#))
- b. The Property and Evidence Specialist shall request an officer disposition letter on all evidence items which have been held until the case is closed or statute has been reached.
- c. Disposal may consist of:
 - 1) Returning to owner;
 - 2) Destruction;
 - 3) Sale at public auction;
 - 4) Retention for maintenance or department use;
 - 5) Returned to applicable other agencies;
 - 6) Retention for records.
- d. Safekeeping items are held as a courtesy to the owner and are not subject to unclaimed property per ORS 133.623. These items will be held for sixty (60) days per the property receipt, plus thirty (30) days after notice, and will be authorized for disposal if the owner fails to claim the property.

610.11.3: DISPOSAL OF PROPERTY

Evidence, firearms, drugs, or money disposed of shall be verified by two employees to ensure accuracy. The verification can be made by any department employee with access to the property and evidence unit. Items submitted for the sole purpose of destruction do not require two-person verification prior to destruction.

610.11.4: FOUND PROPERTY RELEASE TO FINDER

Found property entered into property and evidence valued over \$250 may be released to the finder pursuant of [ORS 98.005](#). The finder shall provide proof in writing, which may include photographs or screenshots, of the publishing in the newspaper for two consecutive weeks and proof of notice to the county clerk. Once the

finder has complied with ORS 98.005 and provided proof to the Albany Police Department, the property shall be released to the finder.

610.12: RELEASE OF EVIDENCE

- a. Evidence may only be released upon the receipt of an evidence disposal authorization from the District Attorney or City Attorney, respectively, and/or an officer disposal letter from the case officer.
 - 1) If the case officer is no longer employed by APD, any captain, investigations lieutenant, or detective sergeant can complete the officer disposition letter.
- b. Once a case has been adjudicated or passed the statute of limitations for prosecution, a Property and Evidence Specialist will request a disposition authorization from the District Attorney's office and/or the assigned case officer.
 - 1) Care should be taken to ensure there are no outstanding warrants for suspects or additional defendants for the same case prior to authorizing release.
- c. Once evidence has been authorized for release and is no longer needed for any pending criminal cases, it shall be considered releasable property and released or disposed of in accordance with those procedures.

610.13: INSPECTIONS AND AUDITS

- a. On a semi-annual basis, the Records and Systems Supervisor shall inspect the evidence storage facilities and practices to ensure adherence to appropriate policies and procedures.
- b. An annual audit of evidence held by the department shall be conducted by a Division Captain appointed by the Chief of Police who is not routinely or directly connected with evidence control.
- c. Whenever the Records and Systems Supervisor (i.e., Property and Evidence Custodian) changes, an audit of evidence and property including an inventory of all drugs, firearms, and money shall be made by the newly designated Records and Systems Supervisor and a designee of the Chief of Police.
- d. Whenever a Property and Evidence Specialist leaves their assignment, or a new Property and Evidence Specialist is appointed, an audit of evidence and property and inventory of all drugs, guns, and money shall be made by the remaining Property and Evidence Specialist(s) and a designee of the Chief of Police. When practical, this audit will occur prior to the appointment of the incoming Property and Evidence Specialist.
- e. An unannounced inspection of the property and evidence storage area will be conducted at the direction of the Chief of Police at least once per year.
- f. Monthly property and evidence inventory will be conducted by Property and Evidence Specialists with the goal of having all items inventoried each year.

- g. At least annually the Property and Evidence Specialists should conduct verification checks on all items currently out to the court, the lab, or an officer.

610.14: SECURITY OF CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES FOR TRAINING

All controlled substances used for training purposes shall be weighed and tested prior to dispensing to the trainer. All controlled substance training samples will be double packaged to prevent leakage, contamination, or exposure to the trainer. The weight and test results shall be maintained by the property and evidence tracking system.

610.15: UTILIZING NIBIN

Guidelines for personnel to utilize IBIS (Integrated Ballistics Information System) to compare and complete ballistics information by utilizing NIBIN (National Integrated Ballistics Information Network) equipment follow procedures in [NIBIN Test Firing SOP271](#).