



OPERATIONAL MANUAL

OPS - 485 – PROPERTY & EVIDENCE

Amends/Supersedes: OPS-485 (09/12/2022)

Date of Issue: 11/17/2025

I. GENERAL

- A. Newport News Police Department employees will properly handle, package, and document items they submit to the Property & Evidence Unit (P&E Unit). They will protect all recovered property from contamination, alteration, destruction, and damage. Additionally, take appropriate action to preserve items that need to be processed for latent prints or laboratory analysis.
- B. Photographic and video evidence collected by a body-worn camera or entered into the Evidence.com or DataWorks systems will be considered original secured images/footage for evidentiary purposes.
- C. Accurate documentation of property that comes into the possession of department personnel meeting any type of property defined below is essential. Chain of custody records that documents everyone who took possession of physical evidence, from its initial collection through disposal, is required. Any handwritten entries on evidence forms and reports will be neat and legible. [83.2.1(d)]

II. DEFINITIONS

- A. *Evidence* - Tangible and intangible items needed to prosecute a case under criminal_investigation, including DVDs, CDs, or other electronic media on which evidentiary photos, audio, or videos are recorded.
- B. *Narcotic Evidence* - Illegal drugs and/or controlled substances.
- C. *Contraband* - Items that by law are illegal to own or possess.
- D. *Found Property* - Items of value that appear to have been lost and not discarded by the owner. This does not include junk or items of little or no value.
- E. *Release to Owner* – When items of value are no longer needed for court purposes and can be returned to the rightful owner.
- F. *Property & Evidence (P&E) Facility* – property and evidence at headquarters.
- G. *Remote Storage Location* – temporary property storage locker located at each precinct and the Major Crimes Division.
- H. *Safekeeping* – non-evidentiary property stored by the department with a known owner and a reasonable expectation that the property can be claimed and returned to the owner.
 - 1. Tobacco products and alcohol will not be stored for safekeeping and will be disposed of in a dumpster located at any police facility.
 - 2. Legalized narcotics and prescription medications will be submitted to P&E for disposal and not returned to the owner.
- I. *Prisoner Property* - Any personal items remaining with a prisoner not related to the criminal charge(s) that are to be processed and accepted by the Sheriff's Department during booking.

NOTE: The Sheriff's Department may not accept larger items, such as a backpack/gym bag. These may be placed in P & E.
- J. *Worthless Property* – abandoned or found property with no known owner and no legitimate value. This includes items designed for disposal and damaged beyond use that are not considered evidence or contraband.



III. PROCEDURE

A. Submission of Property and Evidence

1. All property and evidence recovered will be submitted to the P&E Unit or placed in the temporary storage lockers before the end of the employee's shift. Off-duty employees shall immediately make arrangements to submit any recovered property. [84.1.1(b)]
2. All return to owner property must be brought to headquarters P&E and submitted to avoid delays in returning items to owners.
3. Property recovered during a secondary employment assignment will be submitted by the employee working the secondary employment.

NOTE: Contact a supervisor or the P&E Unit regarding any evidence for which you are unsure of the proper handling and/or submission procedures.

4. When an officer or forensic technician receives physical evidence from another employee in the field, they must document the name of the transferring employee and the time the property was transferred. It is best practice to limit the number of field transfers of physical evidence to as few officers and technicians as possible. [83.2.1(d)]
5. The P&E Unit may refuse to accept any item:
 - a. Improperly packaged, marked, or tagged.
 - b. With an incomplete or improperly completed Property & Evidence Inventory Control sheet (NNPD Form #8, "P&E sheet"), or
 - c. Improperly seized.
6. When submitting an item that contains property (i.e., backpack, purse, bag, etc.), the submitting officer will inventory the contents and document them on the P&E sheet. The contents will be submitted in the original container unless they are illegal, a weapon, hazardous, or currency, in which case they will be packaged following procedures in Section III. D.2 or III. E. If the inventory is conducted following an arrest (see section II. F.), the officer may determine whether items should be submitted as evidence or additional charges may be sought.
7. P&E technicians shall log the information on all received property into the P&E records database as soon as possible. [84.1.1(a)]
8. Whenever the P&E Unit identifies incomplete or improperly completed P&E sheets or an improperly packaged item, the P&E technician will:
 - a. Transmit a copy of the P&E sheet and a brief explanation of changes needed to the submitter with the request that the employee report to the P&E Unit as soon as possible to correct the problem.
 - b. If the employee fails to report within five working days, a follow-up letter will be sent to the employee's supervisor.
9. Employees shall notify the P&E Unit when a final disposition can be made concerning any items submitted. Notification may be made by: [84.1.1(g)]
 - a. A signed Tracer Form.
 - b. A signature in the "Permanent Release of Property Section" of the P&E sheet.
 - c. Department email only if there is a legitimate time-sensitive reason. If email notification is necessary, employees must copy their immediate supervisor and state the reason they are unable to sign the Tracer form or P&E sheet.
10. Release of evidentiary items to employees
 - a. Employees may request the temporary release of evidentiary items for investigative, laboratory analysis, or court purposes. The employee will provide the P&E Sheet number or other identifying information to obtain the items. [84.1.1(g)]



b. Evidence collected from another jurisdiction's stolen vehicle recovered in Newport News will be transferred to the authorized law enforcement member from the original jurisdiction of the vehicle theft. The evidence record will be marked as being transferred to another agency.

11. Various types and sizes of packaging materials (e.g., envelopes, bags, anti-static bags, static shielding, tubes, and boxes) are maintained by the P&E Unit at the P&E facility and remote storage locations. The appropriate size and type of packaging for the turned-in item shall be used.

NOTE: A standard 6x9 or 9x12 envelope shall be used whenever possible.

B. P & E Sheet (NNPD Form #8)

[82.2.1(b,c,d,e); 84.1.1(c)]

The submitting employee will:

1. Segregate property to be returned to the owner on a separate P&E sheet for each owner if the information is known.
2. List property with more than one property classification listing (under "Property Status" at the top of the form) on one P&E sheet.
 - a. List what is to be done with items of different classifications in the "Remarks" section or property description field.
 - b. Separate packaging by classification item is required.
 - c. Complete the entire form. If information is unknown, enter "UNK" in the box.
 - d. Place the IBR report number in the space provided on the P&E sheet. [83.2.1(a)]
3. Distribution of the P&E Sheet
 - a. Submit the top copy of the P&E sheet to the P&E Unit with the property or evidence.
 - b. The submitter retains the bottom copy for their records.
4. The submitter will:
 - a. Check all describable property through NCIC/VCIN and the Department's stolen property files.
 - b. Document how the checks were made and the results of the checks in the "Remarks" section, P&E sheet.
5. P&E sheet numbers:
 - a. Will be recorded on the IBR. Additional inventory numbers will be recorded in the IBR "Remarks" field.
 - b. Use the sheet's pre-printed number when using more than one P&E sheet for a case due to multiple evidence items. The pre-printed number will not be crossed out or altered by officers or detectives. The IBR will connect the different P&E sheet numbers to the case.
6. P&E sheets are maintained in the temporary P&E evidence storage rooms at the P&E facility and remote storage locations.
7. Employees will not remove P&E sheets from these locations unless their use is imminent.
8. For property or evidence submitted for processing by the Forensic Services Unit or testing by the State Crime Laboratory, the submitting employee shall note the information under "Property Status" on the P&E sheet and forward a copy to the P&E Unit so the system can be updated.

NOTE: Each item must be packaged separately in Departmental provided packaging.

C. Locations and Methods of Storage of Property & Evidence

[84.1.2; 84.1.3]

1. Once properly packaged, tagged, and labeled, the submitting employee shall place the property and evidence with the completed P&E sheet into a temporary P&E evidence storage locker. If, at headquarters during the normal P&E business hours, the employee will turn over all property and evidence (except for drugs and digital/video images as set forth herein) directly to a P&E technician.



2. Remote Storage Locations

- a. Access to the P&E evidence storage areas at remote locations shall be gained by the employee's ID card.
- b. All property and evidence turned in at the remote storage locations will be stored in the evidence lockers or the drug mailbox located in the Temporary Evidence Storage Room. After the employee has placed the evidence in the locker, the employee will secure the locker. Evidence will not be left unsecured outside of the lockers. [84.1.2]

NOTE: Only P&E Unit staff have access to secure lockers.

3. P&E Facility

[84.1.2]

- a. An employee's ID will grant access to the temporary evidence storage area at headquarters.
 - b. After normal business hours, all property and evidence turned in at headquarters will be stored in the evidence lockers in the foyer of the P&E/Forensics Building, and the locker locked.
 - c. Drug evidence being turned in at headquarters will be placed in a locker designated as "drug only" storage, following the procedures in Section III.E. *Narcotic Evidence*.
 - d. If the drug lockers at headquarters are full, the drug evidence will be placed in a drug locker at one of the precinct stations.
4. Employees entering the temporary evidence storage room at either a remote storage location or the P&E facility shall sign the entry logbook (completing all columns) maintained inside the temporary P&E evidence storage room. Any entry to a P&E evidence storage area will be logged.
5. Whenever personnel seize items of property and evidence too large to fit into the temporary evidence lockers, one of the following employees will be notified (in descending order) to respond and take possession of the item(s): [84.1.1(e)]
- a. P&E Sergeant
 - b. P&E Drug Control Officer
 - c. P&E Technician
6. Collected latent prints will be placed onto a "Latent Print Card" (NNPD Form #21). Officers will complete all form fields (except as marked otherwise). All prints collected will be listed on the P&E sheet (NNPD Form #8) for that case's evidence.
- a. A separate envelope will be used for each case. The card(s) will be placed into one of the 6 X 9-inch pre-printed manila envelopes, and the following information will be provided:
 - 1) Officer Name.
 - 2) Officer Computer #.
 - 3) IBR # for the related case.
 - 4) Date; and
 - 5) The number of print cards in the envelope.

NOTE: If the supplied pre-printed envelope is not large enough, a larger envelope may be utilized, and the required information printed on the front. When packaging latent prints from an online reporting case, if the IBR # has not been assigned, this field may be left blank, and the P&E # referenced as a note.
 - b. After the prints are placed in the prepared envelope, officers will seal it, initial the seal and enter the prints into the evidence log.
 - c. Once logged, the envelope is placed into the "latent print box" located:
 - 1) Back of the P&E door at North and Central precincts.
 - 2) Above the officers' table/desk at headquarters and South Precinct P&E areas.



- d. P&E personnel will pick up precincts' latent print envelopes from the precinct(s), logging the collection. Collected envelopes will be placed in the P&E latent print box and logged there.
 - e. Forensics technicians/latent print examiners will sign out latent print envelopes picked up from the headquarters latent print box. Pending analysis, the cards will be secured in the latent print room of the Forensics Services Unit.
- D. Narcotic Evidence [83.2.1; 83.2.4(d); 84.1.1(d)]
- 1. Weighing Drug Evidence
 - a. In incidents involving drug evidence, the measurement unit and drug quantity of the seizure must be noted on the "property" page of the IBR. In the "Quantity" section of the IBR property page, the officer will fill in the weight quantity of the drug seized. [82.2.1(a,b,c)]
 - b. Scales are available in the temporary P&E evidence storage rooms at the P&E facility and remote storage locations and on the counter of the officer's work area at the headquarters P&E facility. Instructions for their use will be posted at each location.
 - c. These scales are not calibrated, and the weight recorded is considered an approximate measurement of the amount of drugs seized.
NOTE: The weight listed on the lab analysis report returned from the State Laboratory will usually be different.
 - d. Before weighing, drug evidence must be placed in a drug evidence bag. The bag's weight (13.5 grams/large bag; 11.5 grams/medium bag) is subtracted from the total weight to obtain the approximate evidence weight Drug weights should be rounded to the nearest gram.
NOTE: Approximate weight measurements are only for the property page of the initial IBR. Do **not** use these measurements on the P&E sheet (NNPD Form #8), Request for Laboratory Examination Form (RFLE) (State Form DFS-100-F100), or in the letter of arrest.
 - 2. Drug Evidence Packaging

All narcotics (including those for destruction) must be double bagged during packaging. The narcotics are first placed in a plastic, sealable bag (i.e. a Ziploc bag) the sealed in a drug evidence bag (except for items outlined in this policy's Special Packaging Methods section). Employees recovering narcotic evidence will adhere to the following:

 - a. The drug evidence bags come in two sizes (9 1/2 x 12 and 15 x 20). Do not place drugs in the bags for money evidence (3 3/4 x 7) for any reason.
 - b. Complete the required information on the drug evidence bag, including the recovering employee's initials.
 - c. Seal the bag after inserting the evidence. Additional tape is not required.
 - 1) When packaging more than one evidence item, each should be packaged separately to avoid cross-contamination. Label items on the lab sheet and the zip lock bag with the item number. Plastic zip lock freezer bags provided by P&E are recommended to isolate separate items within a drug evidence bag.
 - 2) Tape the zip lock bags shut (If multiple tablets were found in one pocket, each tablet would not be packaged separately. All items located together of the same substance may be packaged together). All items must be listed on the P&E sheet (e.g., eight pills and five bags of cocaine) with an exact count.
 - 3) Items must be separated by lab and non-lab evidence in separate drug evidence bags.
 - d. After the drug evidence bag is filled and sealed (to include filling out the P&E sheet and Request for Laboratory Examination), all items and forms will be placed into a 10 x 13 manila envelope. Close the manila envelope by its clasp (do not seal with tape) and drop it into the drug mailbox.



- e. If the drugs are for disposal (not held for evidence), do not complete the RFLE Form.
- f. Latent Print Processing [83.2.3; 83.3.2(b,c)]
 - 1) Before submitting containers with latent prints for processing, the contents will be removed and repackaged as drug evidence. The original container will be submitted to the P&E Unit with a separate entry on the IBR property page and a separate P&E sheet for transfer to the Forensic Services Unit for processing. The newly packaged drugs are then submitted as described above.
 - 2) Original containers containing opioids (i.e., heroin, fentanyl, and fentanyl analogs), or suspected opioids, will be packaged as drug evidence using plastic evidence bags, using the proper safety precautions for these drugs. If processing for prints, the packaged container will be submitted to the Department of Forensic Science with the completed DFS100-F100 request and will not be transferred to the Forensic Services Unit.
- g. For multiple arrestees, all the suspects' names must be listed on the evidence, field notes, and lab sheets, indicating which evidence belongs to which suspect.
- h. Once seized, all items of evidence must be kept in sole control of the employee involved until packaged and placed into the evidence locker or turned over directly to the P&E Unit's drug control officer. [84.1.1(b)]
- 3. Property & Evidence Sheet [82.2.1(a,c)]
 - a. Instructions for completing P&E sheets and for packaging and submitting items as evidence are located at the temporary P&E evidence storage lockers located at the P&E facility and remote storage locations.
 - b. All items of narcotic evidence found or turned over to employees without an arrest must be disposed of the same way as evidence with an arrest. The items must be packaged, tagged, and turned into the temporary P&E evidence storage locker with the P&E sheet marked "Dispose."
- 4. Drug Analysis
 - a. Officers may use the approved field test for narcotics detection. The result of this field test is admissible as evidence in preliminary hearings in Court (see [§19.2-188.1](#) of the Code of Virginia). Officers will also complete a Drug Field Test Kit Checklist (NNPD [Form #200M](#)). (See: [OPS-455 Narcotics Investigations](#)) [82.2.1(b)]
 - b. The investigating officer shall complete the RFLE Form (DFS-100-F100), placing it with any drug evidence to be submitted to the State Crime Laboratory. Only evidence requiring analysis should be submitted. Large items such as scales should be dismantled and only the part with residue submitted. [83.3.2]
 - 1) Upon completion of analysis by the State Crime Laboratory, the submitting employee receives a copy of the Certificate of Analysis with the examination results. [83.3.2(e)]
 - 2) When analysis from the State Crime Laboratory was not initially requested for a case, and the Field Test Kit results are later questioned through a court order as part of the case defense, an RFLE Form (DFS-100-F100) shall be completed at that time.
- 5. Special Packaging Methods
 - a. Plastic safety tubes shall be used to package sharp, hazardous items. Once sealed, the tube must be placed in a drug evidence bag and treated as any other drug evidence. The following items require these safety tubes:
 - 1) Razor blades.
 - 2) Needles/syringes.
 - 3) Glass or metal smoking stems; and/or
 - 4) Glass items that may break and cut the bag.



- 2) Do not insert any nylon ties or other authorized ties utilized to process a firearm through the weapon's barrel.
 - 3) If fingerprints or DNA may be recovered from a firearm, do not place it into an evidence locker "loose." It shall be treated as outlined in Section III.E.2.c. The firearm must be readily identifiable as such by the technician retrieving the firearm from the locker.
 - 4) Temporary evidence lockers designed for long guns will not be used for smaller items of evidence unless there is no other available temporary locker.
- c. Handguns submitted for in-house processing shall be cleared of all ammunition and placed in an unsealed 9x12 envelope labeled with the corresponding P&E Property identification number and "Process for Prints."
- d. Firearms that may require swabbing for DNA will be submitted to the P&E facility. Wear protective latex gloves when handling firearms whenever possible to avoid contamination of DNA evidence.

NOTE: If a weapon cannot be unloaded for any reason, contact the Department Armorer for instructions on rendering the weapon safe. Never place loaded weapons in temporary lockers.

- e. When a firearm is recovered for submission to the P&E Unit, the employee completes the following documentation for both evidentiary and safe keeping submissions:
- 1) Complete a Firearms Submission Form (NNPD [Form #86](#)).
 - 2) Interview the person who possessed the firearm and complete a State Police Criminal Firearms Clearinghouse Form (SP-187). Through this interview, attempt to determine where and/or from whom the possessor obtained the weapon.
 - 3) Document the current owner of the weapon (if different from the information in blocks #24 through #35 of Form #SP-187).
 - 4) Document additional information on a plain sheet of paper with the P&E Inventory Control number at the top right and staple it to Form (SP-187). Both forms (SP-187 and NNPD Form #8) with evidence or found property will be submitted to P&E; and
 - 5) Document recovery and classification on the sheet. [82.2.1(a,b,c,d,e)]

NOTE: If the firearm is recovered from a juvenile or school property, the recovering employee will write "Juvenile" in the P&E sheet "Remarks" section.

- f. Special Handling of Semi-Automatic Firearms (NIBIN Testing)
All semi-automatic firearms (i.e., 9mm pistol, Tech 9, AR-15 rifle) and pump shotguns collected as the result of an arrest due to a violation involving that weapon and found weapons shall be submitted for processing into the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN). The submitting employee shall:
- g. Submit the firearm to the Forensic Services Unit NIBIN technician with the completed Firearms Submission form (NNPD [Form #86](#)).
 - h. If a confirmation/correlation from the State Crime Lab is also needed:
 - i. Notification and approval will be obtained through the employee's chain of command; and
 - j. A RFLE Form noting "NIBIN" will be completed.
 - k. Notate "process for prints" on any documentation for firearms also needing latent print processing.
 - l. Weapons seized for "safekeeping" will not be submitted for NIBIN testing. This includes weapons taken due to an arrest not involving the weapon and execution of a Substantial Risk Order.



3. Edged Weapons

Masking tape or cardboard will be placed over the edge and point of edged weapons. If the blade needs to or may be processed for latent prints or DNA, the knife blade will not be covered, but a provided plastic safety tube will be used. Folding knives will be folded, zip tied and placed in a regular envelope.

4. Ammunition

a. Ammunition is stored removed from weapons in zip-lock plastic bags. If the ammunition is old, seeping chemicals, or in any way unstable, contact an on-duty supervisor for a determination concerning alternate ammunition handling.

NOTE: Casings should be packaged with one casing per envelope.

b. Bullets and/or casings submitted as evidence in cases with no weapon shall be submitted on a separate RFL E Form from any other evidence requiring laboratory analysis associated with the investigation.

5. Bio-Hazardous Substances

The recovering employee shall notify an on-duty field sergeant to decide on the items' safe handling and/or packaging. The employee will:

a. Make a notation concerning the nature of the item in the remarks section of the P&E sheet and the packaging.

b. Affix bio-hazard labels to the packaging.

c. Self-sticking bio-hazard labels are available in the temporary evidence storage rooms at the P&E facility and remote storage locations.

d. If the evidence is soaked in blood, the on-duty supervisor needs to contact the on-call Forensics Unit contact to arrange a forensic technician to receive the items to be dried. Forensics will facilitate submission to P&E when the items are ready for packaging.

6. Anonymous/Blind Reporting PERK Kits

a. The medical facility in an anonymous/blind reporting case is responsible for forwarding the PERK kit to the Division of Consolidated Laboratory Services of the Virginia Department of General Services (VA Code [§19.2-11.6](#)).

b. The division will maintain the kits for a minimum of twenty-four months.

7. Chemical & Explosive Hazardous Materials

Chemical or explosive hazardous materials collected and retained as evidence will be secured in the Fire Station #1 repository (Washington Avenue and 34th Street). Evidence collected to test for accelerant presence shall be sealed in an airtight metal canister (available at P&E). If there are any questions or concerns about the packaging and/or transport of the hazardous material, contact the P&E Unit or the Fire Department.

8. Currency/Prepaid Access Devices (PADs)

a. Currency

1) Two officers will be present when counting the currency, with both body-worn cameras activated. Both officers will conduct a count to verify the amount is accurate and initial the evidence seal.

2) List currency as an itemized list of each denomination of bills.

3) Store currency separated by denomination with all bills facing the same direction.

4) Use a clear plastic money bag and record the imprinted bag number on the P&E sheet.

5) Complete [Form-481](#) *P&E Currency Inventory* and place the sheet inside the money bag before sealing it.



- b. List the Prepaid Access Device as evidence and list the card number on the P&E sheet.

NOTE: If the currency or PADs are seized due to drug activities, complete a Drug Asset Forfeiture Report (NNPD [Form #87](#)) and proceed as stated in [OPS-455 Narcotic Investigations](#). [82.2.1(a,b)]

9. Moist or Wet Items

Moist or wet items will be placed into paper bags or air-dried before submission. A notation will be made on the P&E sheet remarks section for special handling of the items. For excessively wet items that require special handling, the employee will contact their supervisor, who will determine whether to contact the P&E technician.

10. Found Property

82.2.1(a,b,c,d,e); 84.1.1(f)]

- a. Worthless property will not be submitted to P&E. If the item is found on city property, it will be discarded in a waste receptacle. Property owners are responsible for disposing of worthless property found on private property.
- b. The recovering employee will make every effort to locate the owner and return the property during their tour of duty. If the owner is not located, a P&E sheet will be completed, documenting all efforts to return the property, and the property will be turned into P&E.

11. Bicycles, Mopeds and Other Motorized Vehicles

[82.2.1(a,b,c,d,e)]

- a. Mopeds and Other Motorized Vehicles (VA Code [§46.2-100](#)) will be handled as follows by the recovering employee:
 - 1) Mopeds and other motorized vehicles being held as evidence will be towed to the Impound Lot per [OPS-340 Towing and Impoundment, Inventory of Vehicles](#).
 - 2) Complete the Bicycle/Moped Recovery Form (NNPD #16). If the moped or other motorized vehicle is to be used as evidence in Court, complete a P&E sheet to submit to P&E.
 - 3) If seized as evidence, vehicles will be stored in the vehicle lot. If recovered as found property, vehicles will be stored at the police warehouse. [84.1.1(d)]
- b. In cases of bicycles held for evidence, the recovering employee will:
 - 1) Transport the bike by a department-approved method (i.e., patrol vehicle bike rack, pick-up truck, etc.) to the Police Warehouse.
 - 2) Contact the on-call P&E technician to secure the bicycle in the Police Warehouse evidence room.
 - 3) Complete a Bicycle/Moped Recovery Form (NNPD #16).
 - 4) Submit a completed P&E sheet to P&E; and
 - 5) Attach a Property & Evidence tag (NNPD Form #7) to the recovered bicycle.
- c. Found bicycles will be secured to the bike rack at the employee's respective precinct to be transported to the Police Warehouse.

12. Large Bulky/Quantities of Items

When an employee recovers an item that is too large for the lockers or a quantity of items that would deplete the amount of locker space available, they will:

- a. Bring the items directly to the P&E Unit.
- b. For physical evidence, have the Communications Division notify the P&E sergeant to determine what action to take.
- c. Large non-evidentiary items can be left on the floor of a precinct evidence room for collection if it is taped shut or otherwise secure to prevent unauthorized access.



13. Computers and Other Electronic Equipment

[83.2.5]

When an employee recovers computers, other electronic equipment (i.e., cell phones, flash drives, etc.), or mobile data devices during an arrest, before placing the object(s) in P&E or booking the suspect, the employee shall refer to [OPS-483 Seizure of Computers and Other Electronic Equipment](#) regarding the recovery and safeguarding processes for useable data.

- a. Static shielding and anti-static bags designed for electronic evidence will be used to preserve digital evidence. (These bags will be available at each precinct and may be replenished through the P&E Unit).
- b. Mark the exterior of seized computers and other electronic equipment "Computer/Electronic Seizure" before submission to P&E.

14. Stored Vehicle Keys

- a. Keys of vehicles towed to the vehicle lot shall be given to the Towing Enforcement Unit. A copy of the tow sheet will accompany the keys.
- b. If the Towing Enforcement Unit is open for business, the keys will be given to the Towing Enforcement Officer. After hours the keys and associate paperwork will be secured in a temporary locker at Vehicle Services (525 Operations Drive), and an email will be sent to the Towing Enforcement Officer.

F. Digital Images, Audio and Video Files

[83.2.2; 83.2.4(b)]

1. **Photographing Evidence:** Photographing evidence is authorized in certain larceny and burglary cases (VA Code [§19.2-270.1](#)). These digital images will be entered into the DataWorks Digital Crime Scene System following procedure. Digital images will be utilized when legally permitted.

2. Digital Images

a. Still digital images taken for investigative purposes are items of evidence and will be entered into the Department's DataWorks Digital Crime Scene System administered by the Forensics Services Unit. The system ensures image integrity for proper downloading, storage, and printing. Digital images include, but are not limited to, those taken in the following circumstances and investigations:

- 1) Crime scenes.
- 2) Vehicular crashes.
- 3) Injury documentation.
- 4) Line-up and show-up identifications.

NOTE: Officers shall ensure that the correct date and time are set on the camera for embedding into the photo file.

- b. Digital images secured for investigations will be put into the system as the image was taken in original, unaltered format. The resulting auto-generated number will be noted in the appropriate case file.
- c. Use the RAW, TIFF, or JPEG file format to digitize images. RAW images are preferred for investigative work when possible. The JPEG format is typically used for non-investigative photography assignments.
- d. Digital photos submitted to Court will be printed on professional quality photographic paper. Other photos are printed on standard paper. Photos will be printed in their original color.
 - 1) Requests for photos printed on photographic paper will be submitted to the Forensic Services Unit. Allow for a two-week turnaround time.
 - 2) Still photographs will be documented with the date, time, and location of the photograph; the name of the person taking a photograph; and a brief description of the photograph
 - 3) Additional photos will be printed on an "as needed" basis for trial and ongoing investigations.



- 4) Requests for digital photos from outside law enforcement agencies, private attorneys, insurance companies, citizens, etc., will be handled as FOIA requests through Records.
3. Digital video recordings of crime scenes, execution of search warrants, and audio recordings of interviews are evidence. They shall be submitted to the P&E Unit following policy (still photographs, except as noted, may be kept in the case folder).
 - a. Audio and digital video recordings will be documented on the P&E sheet with the date; time, recording location; case number, and the name and ID# of the person conducting the recording. DVDs and other recording mediums will be packaged in a suitably sized envelope marked with the P&E number and identifying case information.
 - b. Video recordings from the body-worn camera equipment will be handled per [ADM-570 Body-Worn Cameras](#).
 - 1) The original footage will be maintained in Evidence.com. The security and access to the body-worn camera files are monitored and controlled by the body-worn camera system administrator. [41.3.8 (b)]
 - 2) Any created DVD used for evidence purposes will be handled as set out for digital video recordings.
- G. Release and Disposition of Property [84.1.1(g)]
 1. The following are required for the temporary release and/or final disposition of items from P&E Unit custody:
 - a. The P&E technician will scan the “reason for the release” bar code, the bar code of the officer taking the item(s), and the bar code of each item being released.
 - b. The receiving employee will electronically sign for the property or evidence, signifying receipt of the item(s) and acceptance of responsibility for its return to P&E. [84.1.3]
 - c. The final disposition of evidence will be made upon certification from the recovering employee or the lead investigator that the items are no longer needed as evidence in a criminal case. [84.1.7]
 - d. If the Court confiscates the released evidence, the receiving employee must notify the P&E Unit on the same day. NNPD Form #178 *Release of Evidence to Court* form is completed by the appropriate court must list designated items and be signed by the clerk of the respective court. The original copy is to be returned to the P&E Unit.
 - e. If the department no longer employs the employee responsible for the evidence, the supervisor of the unit responsible for and/or familiar with that type of evidence is authorized to determine a final disposition of the evidence if it is no longer needed for criminal prosecution (i.e., drug evidence would be referred to a Special Investigations Division supervisor). If the unit supervisor does not respond with a determination within fourteen (14) days of the request, the Support Services Division commander, or designee will evaluate the circumstances and make the determination.
 2. Only P&E technicians make final dispositions on items from P&E Unit custody.
 - a. Employees who sign items out of the P&E Unit must return the item before 1630 hours on the same day unless prior arrangements are made with the P&E Unit sergeant or designee.
 - b. Employees may not return items to their owners unless authorization is received from the P&E Unit sergeant in advance. In those instances:
 - 1) A supervisor will accompany the employee to return the item(s) as a witness, or a body worn camera is utilized to document the transaction.
 - 2) A copy of the associated P&E sheet or a computer-generated receipt will be given to the employee to have the owner sign for the property on the back of the sheet or the receipt as directed by P&E personnel. [84.1.1(b); 84.1.7]



- 3) The receipt will be returned to P&E to be entered into the P&E database and attached to Form 8.

3. Tracer Forms

[84.1.7]

Tracer Forms are sent to employees who have submitted items that have been in inventory for longer than six (6) months for misdemeanor cases and twelve (12) months on felony cases. Employees will evaluate the need to hold the items and respond to the P&E Unit within fourteen (14) days of receiving the tracer. The requested information must be completed on the Tracer Form for final disposition (see paragraph G.1.e, above).

NOTE: The P&E Unit drug control officer sends out drug evidence tracers.

4. Permanent Release of Property

Property may not be released to anyone (after the authorized release by the submitting and/or investigating officer) other than the person from whom the property was taken unless the claimant is legally entitled to it. Examples of a legal claim may be evidenced by one of the following:

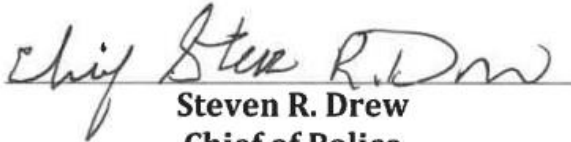
- a. Documentation identifying the claimant as the rightful owner of the property.
- b. A court order which identifies the claimant and the property to be released.
- c. An executor of the estate of the person from whom the property was taken with a notarized power of attorney identifying the holder as the executor; or a court-ordered disposition of the property from a court of final probate authority in estate matters.
- d. A notarized authorization is written in English from a U.S. or Canadian authority or a country with a reciprocal notarial treaty with the U.S. Department of State. The authorization must identify the property and to whom it can be released.
- e. A completed Virginia Small Estate Act form in accordance with [§64.1-132.2](#) of the Code of Virginia.
- f. Requests to release the property to a third party may be made in writing by the rightful owner. The letter must identify the person authorized to receive the property, be signed by the owner, and notarized. In cases involving firearms, the third party must also bring a copy of the owner's photo ID and their own, providing P&E the necessary information to conduct an NCIC and VCIN criminal history check on the owner and the third party.
- g. The case agent, or in case of separation, the supervisor of the unit of the separated case agent will determine who is able to receive the property.

5. Seized/Unclaimed Property Request for Law Enforcement Use

- a. Property shall be declared unclaimed and eligible for use by this Department, the City, and other public agencies when the following criteria have been met:
 - 1) Found property must have been unclaimed from police custody for 60 days.
 - 2) Property seized and presented in Court must be unclaimed for 60 days following the final disposition of the court proceedings related to the seized property.
 - 3) Property must have a negative NCIC and VCIN stolen check.
 - 4) All reasonable efforts to locate the lawful owner must have been exhausted.
- b. P&E staff periodically prepare disposal lists. Once a list has received approval from the Chief of Police and Commonwealth Attorney's Office, it is placed on the Common drive for review. An email is sent to supervisors regarding list item availability. P&E maintains the disposal list for one week before sending it to the State Department of the Treasury, Division of Unclaimed Property, who may claim items.



- c. Any division or employee requesting property acquisition shall first contact P&E to do a visual item inspection. Property in poor condition and needing costly repairs shall not be considered. The requester shall submit a NNPD [Form #137 Seized/Unclaimed Property Request](#) through the chain of command to the Office of the Assistant Chief of Police in the requesting division's chain.
 - d. Property being considered for use may be removed from the P&E Unit to be examined, inspected, or evaluated for a maximum of ten days by individuals or agencies knowledgeable of such items. A properly completed but unsigned [Form #137](#) will be presented to P&E personnel before the item is removed from P&E for inspection. If it is decided to retain the item for departmental use, the item will be returned to P&E, and [Form #137](#) will be sent through the chain of command by the employee for final approval. If the item is not going to be retained, [Form #137](#) will be returned to P&E and destroyed.
 - e. When an item is placed in department service, the receiving employee shall ensure the items are recorded on the department's inventory. A completed Property Transfer/Disposal Form is forwarded to the Logistics Support Unit with an approved copy of the Seized/Unclaimed Property Request. The property becomes part of the department's inventory and is no longer assigned to P&E. [17.5.1]
6. Authorization of Evidence Items for Destruction
- Employees may certify evidence for disposal when it is no longer needed for presentation at court and the statutory time for appeal has been met. If the evidence may have potential residual value in a case, the employee shall discuss the issue with the prosecuting attorney to determine the future need for the evidence. Trace evidence can remain on an item for an indeterminate period; therefore, future DNA testing can be conducted later.


Steven R. Drew
Chief of Police