



HANDLING OF COMMON TYPES OF PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

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I. PURPOSE

Evidence collected at the crime scene or recovered by an officer or crime scene technician must be properly packaged in order to prevent contamination and/or alteration of the item, to protect the item, and to provide a chain of custody. Personnel should consider the admissibility of this evidence in future court proceedings and guard against any deficiencies in the way the evidence is handled and maintained. The chain of custody must be intact and demonstrate who had contact with the evidence, at what time, under what circumstances, and what, if any, changes were made to the evidence.

II. EVIDENCE PACKAGING

Physical evidence should be handled as little as possible. Too much handling may obliterate latent impressions, dislodge minute trace evidence, break brittle evidence or otherwise contaminate the evidence. Disposable gloves, tweezers and special containers may be necessary for handling physical evidence.

Evidence, in addition to the evidence container or packaging, can be marked with either indelible ink or by scratching in identification markings with a scribing instrument, only if it's reasonably certain that such actions will not destroy or compromise the evidentiary value of the item.

Depending on the type of evidence, personnel must use the proper packaging container, must properly seal the container and must properly initial and place their ID number across all seals. Approved evidence containers are paper bags, paper evidence envelopes, cardboard boxes, knife boxes, handgun boxes, rifle boxes, metal cans and small jars. (See IC 1201 Section 4A-F for additional details.)

If latent processing or other forensic analysis is necessary, a completed "Request for Laboratory Examination" form (IC 1203.1 Appendix B) must accompany the evidence. (See IC 1203.1 Section III A and IC 1203.1 Appendix C for additional details.)

III. TYPES OF PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

The following is a list of the most common types of physical evidence and the appropriate instructions for their handling, marking, packaging and collection.

- A. Letters, bank robbery notes, other paper evidence, etc.
Retain all original documents, place in *an evidence* envelope. Do not handle with bare hands.
- B. Bullets or Fragmented Bullets
Bullets and fragmented bullets must be handled with care to avoid destroying the microscopic striations on the item. They should be packaged separately in a soft material (ie. paper towels) and placed into

paper bags and/or evidence envelopes. Due to the possibility of destroying valuable evidence, the evidence itself should not be marked. Mark only the outside of the containers.

C. Cartridges (Live Ammunition)

Package in paper bags or an evidence envelope and mark the outside of the container.

D. Cartridge Cases (Spent Casings)

Cartridge cases must be handled with care to avoid destroying the microscopic striations on the item. They should be packaged separately in a soft material and placed into paper bags and/or evidence envelopes. Due to the possibility of destroying valuable evidence, the evidence itself should not be marked. Mark only the outside of the container.

E. Cell Phones

Package in paper bags or an evidence envelope and mark the outside of the container.

If the phone should need to be examined for other information such as address books or dialed numbers, it should be left turned 'On' and placed inside a protective radio interference bag (available from the Digital Forensics Lab); and/or placed in "Airplane Mode" and submitted to the Digital Forensics Lab for examination as soon as possible. (See IC 1831 Section VIII B for additional details).

F. Compact Discs/DVD's

Place in a CD/DVD case or envelope and package in an evidence envelope. (See IC 1831 Section VIII B for additional details)

G. Clothing/Fabric (Wet/Stained)

Mark directly on clothes in an inconspicuous area, or use a tag. If dry, each article should be packaged individually in paper bags and marked for identification. If wet, clothing must be hung to air dry. Once dry it should be properly packaged as listed above. (Contact ECU for assistance.)

H. Cut Locks

Package in paper bags or an evidence envelope and mark the outside of the container.

I. Firearms

It is the responsibility of the officer or Crime Scene Technician seizing a firearm to unload and render the firearm safe prior to placing the firearm in any storage facility or in Property Management. If an officer or Crime Scene Technician recovers a firearm, which he/she is not familiar with, it is the responsibility of that person to seek assistance from an officer with the knowledge to disarm the firearm properly.

Officers and Crime Scene Technicians will exercise the utmost care and caution in the handling and preservation of recovered firearms. All personnel recovering and/or handling firearms involved in or possibly involved in a crime should wear clean disposable gloves and take measures to protect any latent/forensic evidence (fingerprints, DNA, etc.) that may be on the firearm or on any parts, such as magazines, etc. The same consideration should be made when handling associated ammunition. (See IC 1201 Section IV Item F Number (3) and IC 1201.2 Section III for additional details).

J. Gunshot Residue (GSR)

The collection of GSR on the hands of living subjects should be performed within 6 hours of a suspected shooting.

GSR persistence on a living subject decreases significantly with the passage of time. Hand washing or other physical activities such as, rubbing hands together or wiping them on clothing or other surfaces, that could remove GSR from the hands of a subject CANNOT be permitted prior to sampling.

Be aware that GSR does exist in a law enforcement environment and may be inadvertently transferred to a subject's hands through contact with an officer, their equipment, or the seats of a patrol vehicle. If possible, wear gloves and avoid direct contact with the palms and backs of a subject's hands. To avoid

any loss of evidence or a claim that the officer, their equipment, or the patrol car was the source of GSR, all reasonable attempts should be made to conduct sampling of the subject's hands at the scene prior to handcuffing, and prior to being placed into a patrol vehicle. If this is not possible the subject's hands should be bagged with Tyvek® or paper bags prior to being transported in a patrol vehicle. Officer safety and the scene environment must always be considered. All measures taken to avoid transference and cross contamination should be documented the officer's report.

A search warrant is not required to collect samples from hands or clothing of a suspect under arrest or lawfully detained based on reasonable articulable suspicion. GSR recovery is not invasive of the person; and courts have recognized that GSR evidence may be collected under the exigent circumstances exception to the warrant requirement as GSR evidence is evanescent and can disappear quickly.

For deceased subjects, their hands must be bagged so that GSR is not disturbed during transport to the Medical Examiner's Office. There is no time limit for the recovery of GSR from a deceased subject. At the request of a crime scene technician, Forensic Investigators will seek approval from the OCME, to allow for GSR to be recovered from deceased subjects prior to their being transported to the OCME. (FI's will photograph the recovery process for the OCME).

Clothing may preserve GSR particles after a longer period of time has elapsed between the time of shooting and the time of collection. However, the analysis of clothing can be problematic, as there is no way to determine how long residue particles may remain on clothing. Studies have shown that clothing may retain residue particles even after washing.

Vehicle interiors and other surfaces such as furniture, window sills and other objects within a shooting scene will retain GSR particles until some type of action (wiping, cleaning, environmental elements, etc.) removes it. Recovery efforts should be made as soon as possible and there should be reasonable assurance that the surfaces to be sampled have not been cleaned or disturbed.

K. Knives

Knives with exposed blades should be secured in a knife box with nylon zip ties and marked on the outside of the container. Folding pocket-style knives or knives with no exposed blade may be packaged in an evidence envelope.

L. Medicine

*Suspicious death(s) may be associated with use or alleged misuse of prescription or over the counter medicines. If there is an indication of this early in the investigation, take possession of the medicines and treat them as evidence until a determination is made. **Mark the outside of all containers.***

M. Money

Money will be counted, packaged and sealed in the presence of a supervisor and the officer's and supervisor's initials will be placed across the seal. See IC 1201Section IV Item F Number 3 for additional details.

N. Oral Swabs/Known Standards for DNA Analysis

At a minimum, two swabs are to be recovered from each individual by rotating the cotton swab around the inside of a subject's mouth. (Individuals may be identified as victims, suspects, and owners/operators of evidence and/or vehicles). Swab boxes consist of a cardboard container that requires assembly. Clean disposable gloves should be worn when handling and assembling each box as well as during recovery efforts. Only two swabs should be packaged in each box with all openings sealed and the outside container marked for identification. Separate swab boxes shall be used for each subject that standards are collected from. Contact ECU for additional details and supplies.

O. Shoe Prints

Contact the Evidence Collection Unit for assistance.

P. Syringes and Razor Blades

Syringes and razor blades recovered as a result of a suspected fatal overdose will be placed in a portable plastic “sharps” container, and must have the cap(s) sealed with an orange “Biohazard” label. The “sharps” container will then be placed into a cardboard box/tube specifically designed to contain and transport the plastic “sharps” container. The box/tube must be properly sealed and taped. The recovering/submitting officer must place his/her initials across the seal. The box/tube containing the “sharps” container will then be placed into a clear plastic CDS evidence bag. The CDS evidence bag containing the packaged syringe will be sealed, labeled and submitted following the submission procedures outlined in Index Code 1202 Section III Items A-E.

Q. Tools

Package each tool separately in paper bags or an evidence envelope.

R. Tool Marks

Comparative examinations can be performed if the tool has been recovered. Marks should be photographed and may be casted for preservation and future analysis. Package each item individually in paper bags or an evidence envelope. Contact ECU for assistance.

S. Trace Evidence

Trace evidence can be any substance that may or may not be visible to the unaided eye, and is typically transferred from one person, place, or thing, to another person, place, or thing as a result of contact. Common types of trace evidence consist of paint, glass, hairs, fibers, soil, vegetation, adhesives, and drywall dust.

Trace evidence can also include fracture or physical matching of cut, torn, or broken materials where the realignment of the objects can be conducted to prove that they at one time formed a single object. Contact ECU for assistance.

If you are unsure about the *collection* and preservation of any type of *physical* evidence, contact the Evidence Collection Unit before proceeding any further.

IV PROPONENT UNIT: Evidence Collection & Identification Section

IV CANCELLATION: This directive cancels Index Code 1203.3, dated 12-05-14.