



**California State University, Los Angeles**  
**Department of Public Safety**

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NUMBER: III-3 APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_  
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EFFECTIVE: April 10, 2013

SUPERSEDES: 3/11/2009 Reviewed/Revised: May 2, 2020

SUBJECT: **Collection and Preservation of Evidence**

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**I. PURPOSE:**

To establish guidelines for identifying, collecting and preserving evidence at crime scenes.

**II. POLICY:**

It is the policy of this Department to ensure that all crime scenes are processed thoroughly and evidence collected to aid in the eventual prosecution of offenders. The effective exercise of law enforcement responsibility in the investigation of crime and in the prosecution of offenders requires that information be obtained through the application of scientific knowledge and methods.

**III. DEFINITIONS:**

- A. Evidence. Any property related to a crime, or incident that may implicate or vindicate a person from a criminal charge. Items deemed “evidence” can be held on the most minor offenses to the most severe. Evidence items must be related to a crime and must be appropriately maintained. Penal Code Section 1417-1419 describes the proper options for disposing of evidence once a case has been adjudicated or closed.
- B. Evidence Controller. Refers to the person assigned to be accountable for all items of evidence or property held for safekeeping until their final disposition.
- C. Found Property. Property unrelated to a crime, which after coming into the possession of any Public Safety employee, has been determined to be lost. Refer to Property Management III-2 for information regarding Lost and Found Property and property disposals.
- D. Owner Applied Number [O.A.N.] – refers to that number applied by any person other than the manufacturer, which identifies a product as unique from all other products of the same model and manufacturer. O.A.N. may include, but is not limited to, drivers license number, social security, or state tag number.
- E. Physical Evidence. Any substance or material found or recovered in connection with a criminal investigation.

- F. Property for Safekeeping. Any property not related to a crime, primarily placed in the custody by this department for temporary protection, or in an effort to determine legal ownership pursuant to Penal Code Section 1412. It includes property voluntarily turned in by its owner for destruction (frequently ammunition or firearms). Firearms can also be held pursuant to Penal Code 12028.5 et. Seq., or Welfare and Institution Code Sections 8102-8203. Personal property or any other item which is seized pursuant to a detention for Welfare and Institution Code 5150 may also be held for safekeeping under Government Code 29940- 26642.
- G. Property Seized Pursuant To A Search Warrant. Property seized pursuant to a search warrant includes not only property seized pursuant to a court ordered search warrant, but all items ordered seized by a judicial court with appropriate Jurisdiction. Applicable to this section are Penal Code Sections 1535 and 1536. Items seized under the jurisdiction of the court issuing the warrant shall be held indefinitely until the court orders the items released, destroyed, or turned over to the court.
- H. Serial Number. Refers to that number applied by the manufacture that identifies a product as unique from all other products of the same model and manufacturer.

#### **IV. PROCEDURES:**

- A. Qualified personnel shall be available on a 24-hour basis to process a crime scene of traffic accident.
  - 1. Generally, the Uniform Patrol Officer assigned the preliminary report shall process a crime or accident scene.
  - 2. In the more difficult or higher profile cases [i.e., sexual assaults, robbery, burglaries with a high loss value], the Watch Commander will make the decision on whether to notify Investigations for their response to process the scene. Uniform Patrol personnel will secure the scene in these cases until the transfer of responsibilities is established.
- B. Materials and substances shall be collected from known sources, whenever available, for submission to the laboratory for comparison with physical evidence collected.
  - 1. A significant degree of the value of laboratory examinations concerns the identification of substances and comparison of these with materials from known sources.
  - 2. This is true especially in the case of the study of hairs, fibers, paint, glass, wood, soil, and tool marks.
  - 3. The location from which samples from a known source are taken is critical where fractures have occurred, such as in glass, wood, paint, and metal.
- C. Guidelines and procedures used for the collecting, processing, and preserving physical evidence – including documented transfer of custody – in the field.
  - 1. Field Evidence Operations

- a. The first officer on the scene will secure the scene and limit entrance to necessary personnel only. The watch commander will determine whether the scene is to be processed by patrol personnel or Department Investigators. The seriousness of the offense will be the deciding factor. In all cases major cases, Department Investigators will be notified to respond.
- b. The officer or designee responsible for the scene shall:
  - 1) Assume control of the scene and protect evidence through the use of natural barriers or crime scene tape.
  - 2) Conduct a preliminary scene survey.
  - 3) Document those who enter and exit the scene.
  - 4) Photograph the scene and any evidence.
  - 5) Sketch and diagram the scene for any serious Part I crimes when a sketch may benefit the investigation.
  - 6) Process the scene for physical evidence to include fingerprints, shoe and tire impressions, tool marks, hairs, fibers, and trace or biological evidence.
  - 7) Package, label and collect items of evidence.

## 2. Preliminary Scene Survey

- a. Officers/Investigators will conduct a preliminary scene survey once they have provided aid to the injured and determined no suspects remain on scene.
- b. Preliminary actions should include:
  - 1) Observe and record (look but don't touch).
  - 2) Determine nature and extent of the crime scene.
  - 3) Determine location of evidence.
  - 4) Determine order of collection.
  - 5) Establish best working route.
  - 6) Duplicate movement of the perpetrator--in though--and plan the search accordingly.
  - 7) Note all existing conditions.
  - 8) Note items out of place or damaged.
  - 9) Note relationship between items.
  - 10) Create an initial rough sketch.

## 3. Crime Scene Sketch

- a. Detailed crime scene sketches are normally prepared only in major crimes.
- b. Minimum detail to be contained in the sketch includes:
  - 1) Time and date of preparation.
  - 2) Location of offense, measurement from landmark.
  - 3) Location of items of evidence in the scene.
  - 4) Location and names of victims, witnesses, and suspects.

- 5) Relationships of the crime scene to other rooms, buildings, roads, etc.
  - 6) Name of person preparing sketch.
  - 7) Direction of north.
  - 8) What lights were on/off.
  - 9) What windows were open.
4. Photographing the Scene (conventional or digital)
- a. At the end of the preliminary scene survey, overall photographs of the scene should be taken.
  - b. Take overall photos from several different locations.
  - c. Photograph the surrounding area thoroughly.
  - d. Record information on each photograph taken to include, at a minimum, the case number.
  - e. Midrange photography is utilized to orient the viewer as to the exact location of items of evidence in the scene.
  - f. The officer should attempt to include two items of evidence into the field of view, if possible, then a common item such as a desk, chair, etc.
  - g. Midrange photos should always be taken with a normal lens to prevent distortion.
  - h. Close-up photography should be utilized photograph items of evidence before they are moved. These photographs should be taken:
    - With a full field of vision with the item; and
    - With a close-up shot of the item with a scale, such as a six-inch ruler.
  - i. The officer processing the scene shall note in the incident report what photos were taken.
  - j. Non-Departmental cameras are strongly discouraged from being used for official evidentiary purposes unless perishable evidence would otherwise be lost.
5. Video Taping the Scene (conventional or digital)
- a. Some major crime scenes should also be videotaped.
  - b. The videotape should record the condition of the scene, victims, and suspects, and collection of the evidence.
  - c. The sound should not be on when videotaping a crime scene.

- d. It will be noted in the incident report that the crime scene was videotaped, the date and time, and person filming. The video tape will be entered into the Department evidence system.
6. Three-Dimensional Imaging
    - a. Crime scene investigations requiring three-dimensional imaging will be sourced out by the investigating officer to an agency or organization that is equipped and certified to provide this service.
7. Collection of Evidence
    - a. Processing, developing, lifting, and labeling of fingerprints
      - 1) Obtain elimination fingerprints from victims and other relevant persons whenever it is possible that such persons produced the lifted latent prints.
      - 2) Items to be fingerprinted should be photographed where they were found prior to collection.
      - 3) Decide whether to obtain latent prints at the scene or to package and request fingerprinting be performed at a later time.
      - 4) Smooth surfaces are the easiest to process for fingerprints and can easily be processed at the crime scene.
      - 5) Choose a fingerprint powder that is a contrasting color to the surface being processed. Black, gray and white powders are available.
      - 6) This department primarily utilizes volcanic (oxide) and magnetic powder.
        - Volcanic (oxide) powder is used on paper products, wood, painted non-metallic and painted metallic surfaces.
        - Magnetic powder is used on paper, wood, plastic, painted non-metallic, glass, porcelain, and china surfaces.
      - 7) Fingerprint powder should be lightly applied utilizing circular motions with the brush to pick up the circular patterns of the fingerprint.
      - 8) The fingerprint should be lifted utilizing transparent tape applied evenly to prevent air bubbles. Once lifted the tape with the print should be placed on a lifter card.

9) The card should be marked with the following information:

- Location;
- Case number;
- Date and time; and
- Officer's name.

b. Marking Evidence

1) The officer collecting the item of evidence will be the person responsible for marking or labeling the item at the time it first comes into custody.

2) All items of evidence will be marked by the Officer for later identification with the following exceptions:

- Items that bear a serial or OAN. Items will not be dismantled to locate these numbers.
- Items that can be easily identified by distinctive markings.
- Where marking the item would destroy its evidentiary value.

3) Evidence should be marked in the following manner:

- Make mark(s) as small as practical.
- Make the mark distinctive and recognizable to the person making the mark.
- Mark in a place unlikely to reduce the value of the item.
- Spent cartridge cases may be marked in the inside of the casing or on the outside near the opening.
- Bullets may be marked on the base.
- Documents shall be marked by placing the case number, in ink, on the front upper right hand corner of the document. The Booking employee should then initial the reverse side of the document.

4) Where marking the item is impractical, it will be packaged with an evidence bag labeled with a red tag and sealed.

7. Packaging of Evidence

a. Officers may use envelopes, bags or boxes, whichever is most appropriate, for packaging evidence.

b. Evidence, which contains body fluids, such as blood and semen, are not to be packaged in plastic bags. These items should be air dried and placed in paper bags then sealed and signed.

c. Always package money, drugs and guns separately and not with any other items.

- d. Money must be counted and verified by two officers. Coins will be packed in envelopes or plastic bags and sealed. The verified total of coin and currency will be written on the outside of the package, initialed by the collector and verified by the watch commander.
  - e. Drugs and drug paraphernalia will be secured in tamper-proof protective packaging.
  - f. All firearms must be made safe (ammunition removed) and must be properly packaged and red tagged.
8. Evidence Processing Equipment
- a. Equipment and supplies required for processing scenes, collecting and preserving physical evidence, and investigating accidents are available to all officers either as part of a portable evidence collection kit, in Room 15A where the temporary evidence lockers are located, or in the Investigator's office.
  - b. Crime scene processing equipment that is available for use includes:
    - 1) Fingerprint kits containing volcanic and magnetic powders, brushes, tape, and cards.
    - 2) Digital, Polaroid, 35 mm, and video cameras.
    - 3) Crime scene sketch pads, rulers and templates.
    - 4) Packaging and collection materials such as plastic and paper bags of various sizes, envelopes, plastic containers, evidence tags and marking pens.
- D. Documentation at a Crime or traffic Collision Scene
- 1. The reporting officer will note in the Incident Report who processed the crime or traffic accident scene and what forms of processing occurred.
  - 2. The officer will note if photographs were taken and if a sketch was made.
  - 3. If the scene was processed for fingerprints, this will be noted.
  - 4. If no evidence was recovered after processing, or if the scene could not be processed due to contamination this will be noted in the report.
  - 5. The officer who processes the crime/accident scene will prepare a log of each item of evidence recovered at the crime scene. The log will list each item numerically as it is recovered. A description of each item of evidence recovered will also be noted.
  - 6. Each item of evidence recovered or seized will be noted on a Property/Evidence Record form and within the ARMS report.

7. Employees will book only that quantity of evidence necessary for case prosecution and it shall be logged into department evidence records system as soon as possible.
- E. The transfer of custody of all physical evidence shall be documented using the property/evidence form (#2258). All evidence transferred from one person or authority to another shall be documented in writing with the form, plus noted in the ARMS written incident/crime report.
- F. Procedures for the submission of evidence to accredited laboratories.
1. The person responsible for submitting evidence for forensic analysis shall be the Investigator assigned to the case or the evidence custodian. This person will be responsible for maintaining the chain of evidence and safeguarding the delivery to the lab for analysis.
  2. Methods of packaging and transmitting evidence to the laboratory for analysis.
    - a. The methods for packaging and transmitting the evidence to the lab will conform to the department's and the laboratory's requirements.
    - b. The original field packaging will be included in the submittal, which can be supplemented by additional safeguards, if required.
    - c. The package will be sealed and secured and physically maintained by the investigator at all times.
    - d. The items submitted shall be delivered by the assigned investigator or the evidence custodian to ensure chain-of-custody.
  3. Types of documentation to accompany evidence when transmitted.
    - a. Documentation to accompany the evidence to the lab shall include the appropriate form for the type of analysis requested.
    - b. A copy of the department's Evidence & Property Form (#2558) will be included with the submittal.
  4. Receipts to ensure maintenance of chain-of-custody.
    - a. When the evidence is obtained from the Property/Evidence Room, the person receiving the evidence will sign and convey the appropriate documentation and ensure the Evidence Controller signs for the return of the evidence.
    - b. Evidence released to the crime lab will include date/time, person releasing the property and the receiving technician with the lab. This documentation is to be returned to the Evidence Room for inclusion in the evidence records.
    - c. Signatures and receipts will be obtained anytime there is a transfer of control to ensure maintenance of the chain-of-custody.
    - d. A written follow-up report shall be completed in ARMS to further document the forensic analysis action requested.
  5. All Evidence that is submitted for lab analysis and examination shall include the stipulation that the results be submitted in writing.



V. Attachments: Copy of Property Form.

**CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, LOS ANGELES  
UNIVERSITY POLICE DEPARTMENT  
CAO / 0198300  
EVIDENCE AND PROPERTY FORM**

PAGE	OF
CASE #	
DATE	
CRIME	
CHARGES(S)	

LOCATION OF CRIME <input type="checkbox"/>		TRAFFIC COLLISION SCENE <input type="checkbox"/>		BOOKING #		<input type="checkbox"/> Evidence <input type="checkbox"/> Safekeeping <input type="checkbox"/> Held for Observation - 72 Hours <input type="checkbox"/> Held Per 5150/8102 W&I Code <input type="checkbox"/> 12028.5 PC <input type="checkbox"/> Narcotics <input type="checkbox"/> Firearms <input type="checkbox"/> Search Warrant <input type="checkbox"/> Stolen or Embezzled Property	
ARRESTEE <input type="checkbox"/>		SUSPECT <input type="checkbox"/>		DATE	TIME		
FOUND BY			DATE	TIME			
OWNER/VICTIM			PHONE				
ADDRESS			CITY				
ZIP							
BOOKED BY		ID#	DATE	TIME			
ITEM #	QTY.	Code Type	DESCRIBE PROPERTY (Include Serial/Model/Owner Applied # if applicable)				EVIDENCE CONTROLLER USE ONLY

Temporary location of evidence:(Temporary locker #) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Total Number Items: \_\_\_\_\_

RELEASED TO: <input type="checkbox"/> Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Other	Item No. (s) _____
RECEIVED BY: (Signature) _____	DATE/TIME _____
NAME: (Print) _____	RELEASED BY _____
ADDRESS: _____	AUTHORITY OF: _____
ID # _____	PHONE #: _____

This form constitutes notification of your rights according to laws. Your signature is not an admission of responsibility but indicates that you have received a copy of this notice. Please review the back of this sheet for an explanation of your rights.

Signature of Person Receiving/PR: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

<b>THIS SECTION TO BE COMPLETED BY EVIDENCE CONTROLLER</b>
Taken from Temporary location and placed in evidence storage:
Location stored: _____