
	Florida State University Police Department	
Collection and Preservation of Evidence		
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Policy

Collection and Preservation of Evidence Policy

The ability of the FSU Police Department (FSU PD) to accomplish its mission, particularly in instances of criminal offenses, is directly correlated with its members’ knowledge, skills, and abilities pertaining to evidence collection and preservation procedures. It is no understatement to suggest that non-adherence to the procedures discussed within this General Order can and will undermine our ability to protect and serve both the University and local community. Hence, it shall be the explicit policy of the FSU PD that the procedures for processing and handling evidence shall follow the provisions of this General Order in addition to the provisions within the *FDLE Evidence Submission Manual* (ESM). Processing and handling includes, but is not limited to: identifying, processing, preserving, collecting, labeling, and sorting crime scene evidence.

Procedure

A. **General Overview of Procedures**

This General Order includes procedures for crime scene processing, collecting, identifying, photographing or videotaping, and preserving physical evidence in the field, and documenting custody transfer of physical evidence. Procedures for latent fingerprint searches and collection, crime scene reports, laboratory analysis submissions, and access to personnel, equipment and supplies for crime scene processing are further addressed.

The Department’s Evidence Technician is normally available between the hours of 8 a.m. and 4 p.m., Monday through Friday. However, if the Evidence Technician is needed and not available after his or her normal work schedule, i. e., 24-hours/day, then the Shift Supervisor, upon notification that the Department’s Evidence Technician is unavailable and that an evidence technician is needed, shall contact FDLE, the Tallahassee Police Department or the Leon County Sheriff’s Office and request that one of its evidence technicians be sent to the crime scene [CFA 27.04].

B. **Crime Scene Search**

A crime scene requires a planned, legal, coordinated search by law enforcement personnel to locate tangible evidence or witnesses to the crime under investigation. In order for a crime scene search to be effective, the crime scene search should include the following elements, not necessarily in the order presented:

1. **Protecting and Searching the Crime Scene:** Only authorized personnel shall be allowed into any crime scene. Too many persons inside a crime scene may lead to evidence being destroyed, moved, or contaminated before it can be recognized, evaluated, and collected. The first officer on the scene shall be responsible making an initial determination of the boundaries of the crime scene and for securing the scene to prevent contamination. [CFA 27.01 A. and B.]
2. Uniform patrol members will process crime scenes that require minimal latent investigation, to include:
 - a. Limiting access to the scene while the investigation is in progress [CFA 27.01 A.].
 - b. Logging the names of persons who enter or leave the crime scene. This can be accomplished by the use of a crime scene log, if circumstances warrant.
 - c. Photographing, videotaping, sketching the scene, if applicable.
 - d. Identifying, protecting, preserving the condition of evidence during and after collection, packaging and placing items of evidentiary value in the proper FSUPD evidence storage facility. Officers will follow the procedures outlined in the FDLE Evidence Submission Manual for collecting, preserving, and packaging evidence [CFA 27.01 A.].
 - e. Documenting and recording all evidence collected at a crime scene as soon as possible. In addition, the officer shall ensure that all evidence is turned over to the Department's evidence function before the end of the officer's shift. If the Evidence Technician is unavailable, the evidence shall be placed within the designated property/evidence storage locker [CFA 28.01 B.].
3. If the Shift Supervisor summons an investigator or evidence technician to the crime scene, the crime scene shall remain secure and protected until the investigator or evidence technician who will be taking control of the crime scene arrives. No collection of evidence shall take place prior to the arrival of the investigator.

C. **Conducting a Preliminary Search of the Crime Scene**

Before any officer/investigator in charge of the crime scene begins a preliminary search for evidence, all persons involved in the crime scene shall be equipped with sufficient protective equipment as dictated by the incident. No eating, smoking, or drinking will be permitted in any crime scene. The agency members will limit the disturbance of evidentiary items and the introduction of any foreign materials [CFA 27.01 A. and B.].

When the preliminary search for evidence begins, either by the officer handling the crime scene, the investigator assigned to process the crime scene, or evidence technician, the officer, investigator, or evidence technician shall:

1. First make a visual scan of the crime scene to plan the overall strategy for evidence collection, taking steps to avoid evidence loss or contamination.
2. The officer/investigator will then begin a methodical search for evidence hidden or concealed in areas of the crime scene not immediately apparent.

D. **Narrative/Note Taking of The Crime Scene**

Officers/investigators may use any or all of the following methods to record an accurate description of the crime scene:

1. Digital Photography

2. Written notes;
3. Audio recording;
4. Video recording; or
5. Sketching.

The following basic information should be recorded:

1. Time of the investigation and the time or details that might be useful in estimating the time of the incident;
2. Location of the search;
3. Weather conditions;
4. Lighting conditions;
5. Identification of personnel in the crime scene.
6. No item is too insignificant to record.
7. Items of evidentiary value should be noted, to include:
 - a. Position of the evidence;
 - b. Condition of the evidence; and
 - c. Any known changes caused by emergency response personnel and/or life saving efforts.

E. Sketching The Crime Scene

The investigating officer may sketch a crime scene, if necessary. A sketch is used in clarifying investigative data to make the situation easier to understand later in court. If sketches are made, the following shall be included:

1. Address or location of the sketch;
2. Case number and crime type;
3. Sketch preparer and their assistants;
4. Date and time; and
5. Physical dimensions and measurements.

Sketches are evidence and shall be properly packaged, labeled, sealed with evidence tape, and secured in the custody of the FSUPD evidence technician [CFA 27.01 G.].

F. Photographs and/or Videotaping

Crime scene photographs or videotaping should be taken to follow basic established guidelines.

1. The overall crime scene will be photographed to provide a spatial relationship to individual items photographed.
2. Evidence will not be disturbed or moved until it has been photographed in its original position.
3. Measuring devices should be photographed with the subject matter. All photographs, film or digital, should be labeled by:
 - a. Case number.
 - b. Date and time.
 - c. Location of crime.
 - d. Location of the evidence photographed.
 - e. Photographer.
 - f. Name of individual photo file if a digital photograph.
4. Crime scene photographs and videotaping should be taken of the area from long, medium, and close range.
5. Each stage of the commission of the crime must be treated and photographed separately.
6. Crime scene photographs and video recording, digital images, or those developed by a processing agent, submitted to evidence shall be properly packaged, sealed with evidence tape, initialed, and placed into evidence along with a completed FSUPD property receipt by the investigating officer.
7. Digital Photography and Video recording. In order to ensure the authenticity of digital photographs and/or videos, the following procedures shall apply: Digital pictures may be submitted by the reporting officer into Spillman Records Management software, the officer shall also make a notation of the submission in the narrative of the police report.
 - a. If the original digital image or series of images are saved to a CD the disk or CD shall be stored as evidence in accordance with the pertinent provisions of this general order. That is a completed property receipt shall contain all the information required regarding other forms of evidence/property associated with the case.
 - b. If any image or series of images are to be analyzed electronically or otherwise enhanced, the new image files created should be saved as new file name(s). The original file must not be replaced (overwritten) with a new file. With the exception of "brightening" an image for better viewing, no image or series of images may be enhanced or otherwise electronically edited without the express permission of the Support Services Captain.
 - c. At the discretion of the Support Services Captain, he or she may instruct the Evidence Technician or Coordinator of Computer Applications to make any digital images available to FSU PD investigators or other law enforcement officials in "read-only" format, i.e., another person would not have the ability to overwrite, delete, or otherwise alter the image
 - d. The Coordinator of Computer Applications shall ensure that any and all digital image evidence eventually transferred/stored on the Department's server is protected by up-to-date security software and access procedures.

G. Traffic Homicide or Trash Crash with Serious Bodily Injuries

Whenever a traffic homicide or traffic crash involving serious bodily injury occurs, the initial responding officer and the supervisor shall follow the procedures outline in this general order to the extent possible. The traffic homicide report shall be completed by a Traffic Homicide

Investigator in accordance with the procedures of the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles.

1. The supervisor shall additionally:
 - a. Summon a Traffic Homicide Investigator from the Tallahassee Police Department or other law enforcement agency having jurisdiction
 - b. Notify the Patrol and Investigations Division Commanders during normal hours.
 - c. Notify the Investigations Division Commander at other than normal hours. If the Investigations Division Commander is unavailable the Patrol Division Commander shall be notified.
2. The Chief shall be notified by the Patrol Division Shift Supervisor.

H. **Collecting Evidence**

Evidence will be collected, labeled, and packaged carefully so it will be properly preserved and to maintain a chain-of-custody [CFA 27.01 A].

1. Major crime scene evidence collected will be photographed and noted prior to being picked up.
2. Since computers are now commonly found at crime scenes and can often store vital evidence, caution will be used in the collection of computer evidence. Officers/investigators shall only collect these types of evidence if trained to do so. FDLE Computer Evidence Recovery unit (CER) may be contacted for assistance, if necessary.
3. Sufficient samples will be collected at crime scenes when possible and practical including controlled substances. For additional information refer to FDLE Evidence Submission manual for specific guidelines. Obtaining sufficient samples may require impounding materials or objects upon which fluids, liquids, and physiological evidence are found. This material may include, but is not limited to [CFA 27.01 C]:
 - a. Sheets.
 - b. Clothing.
 - c. Carpeting.
4. Proper containers will be used for the collection and storage of liquid evidence [CFA 27.01 D].
 - a. Use a clean (sterile) specimen container having a leak proof closure.
 - b. Each specimen should be labeled with the subject's name, date, case number, initials of the person collecting the specimen, and the officer's initials [CFA 27.01 G].
 - c. Packing and marking requirements must be followed in accordance with OSHA Blood Borne Pathogens Standard and the FDLE Evidence Submission Manual. Appropriate biohazards warning labels shall be affixed to the primary and secondary container
5. Perishable items of evidentiary value, such as blood or other biological materials, shall be preserved in the proper containers and packaged correctly to preserve the item or specimen. Perishable items of evidentiary value will remain refrigerated until the specimen can be taken to the laboratory. The items listed below must be taken to the lab as soon as possible. [CFA 27.01 E].
 - a. Refrigerated items.

- b. Items for toxicology analysis.
6. Wet items of evidentiary value shall be dried before being packaged in the proper container [CFA 27.01 F]. This includes damp swabs, clothing, or bedding.
 - a. The item must be completely air dried or dried using the forensic drying cabinet before being packaged properly and sent to the laboratory.
 - b. Drying must take place in a secure area, and shall be done in such a manner as to prevent contamination.
 - c. If this wet item of evidentiary value may have latent prints DO NOT PROCESS the item. Latent print processing may interfere with subsequent serological examination.
 7. Officers/investigators shall secure items of evidence in an evidence locker once properly marked, sealed, and labeled. The evidence custodian shall be responsible for checking the temporary evidence lockers each business day. Items of evidence will be transferred to the evidence vault by the evidence custodian. All items of evidence will be maintained in a secure and environmentally safe manner.

I. **Marking, Packing, Sealing, Labeling Evidence** [CFA 27.01 G, 27.15 E]

1. All articles of evidentiary value that are collected at a crime scene or other location will be carefully marked for identification.
 - a. An officer may place his/her "initials" on the items to be marked.
 - b. Once the item of evidence is properly packaged, the item then can be sealed with evidence tape
2. Each item of evidentiary value shall be properly sealed with evidence tape in the appropriate package or container by the impounding officer/investigator [CFA 27.01 G].
 - a. The integrity of the sealed package is critical. The impounding officer/investigator's initials and date should be placed across the evidence tape and onto the package containing the evidence.
 - b. In some cases, such as the collection of fibers, if the item is not properly sealed the item may be rendered contaminated and not valid for fiber examination.
 - c. Liquid containers shall be placed in a plastic bag to prevent leakage. The item will then be placed in another package. Both packages shall be labeled [27.01 D].
3. The following items are known as high security items and shall be packaged and sealed separately:
 - a. Money/negotiable instruments.
 - b. Valuables, to include jewelry, gemstones, precious metals.
 - c. Weapons/Firearms.
 - d. Drugs/Suspected drugs
4. Each item of evidentiary value, once marked and sealed in the proper container or package, shall be labeled on the outside of the package. Additional warning labels shall be affixed such as "biohazard", "loaded firearm" to the item, if appropriate. All items of evidentiary value shall be labeled with the following information:
 - a. Date and case number;

- b. Description of the item;
- c. Exhibit/Item number; and
- d. Officer name impounding the item.

J. Evidence Documentation

Property Receipt: All items of evidentiary value collected at a crime scene shall be documented on a FSUPD property receipt, including the following information:

- 1. Exhibit number;
- 2. Quantity;
- 3. Item Number; and
- 4. Description of the item to include all pertinent information.

Chain-of-Custody: Whenever a transfer of custody of physical evidence takes place, it will be documented on the property receipt chain of custody and in the electronic property/evidence chain of custody tracking system, including the following:

- 1. Date, time and method of transfer [CFA 27.02 A].
- 2. Receiving person's name and responsibility [CFA 27.02 B].
- 3. Reason for the transfer [CFA 27.02 C].

K. Laboratory Submissions.

- 1. Officers/Investigators submitting evidence and wish for lab analysis to be completed, shall complete and forward a Lab Analysis Request Form to the Evidence Technician. The form shall include the case number, offense, description of item(s), item number and analysis requested. If items are rejected by the FDLE Crime Lab for analysis, the Evidence Technician will note the reason and notify the officer making the request.
- 2. The evidence technician is responsible for completing the "FDLE request for examination of physical evidence" form on any item of evidence requiring or needing analysis by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement Regional Crime Laboratory. Arson evidence shall be delivered to the Fire and Arson laboratory.
- 3. The evidence technician shall be responsible for transferring the evidence to the appropriate laboratory for analysis.
- 4. Evidence in sexual offense cases or other major cases requiring analysis shall be submitted to the appropriate lab within one work week of receipt, unless the delay is otherwise authorized by the Investigations Lieutenant. Under no circumstances will a delay of more than 30 days be authorized.
- 5. Prior to the time the evidence is removed from the temporary storage locker or evidence vault, the evidence technician shall complete the following on the FSUPD property receipt and in the Evidence Tracking System for chain-of-custody purposes:
 - a. Date, time, and method of transfer [CFA 27.02 A];
 - b. Reason for the transfer [CFA 27.02 C];
 - c. Receiving person's name and responsibility [CFA 27.02 B].
 - d. Name and location of the laboratory [CFA 27.02 D].
- 6. Request documentation (Physical Evidence Form): The evidence technician shall complete the proper section on the request for examination form that includes the following:
 - a. Offense, date, case number

- b. Exhibit number and description of the evidentiary item.
- c. Synopsis of event and type of analysis requested for examination [CFA 27.02 D]
- d. Name of the victim(s) if applicable;
- e. Name of the subject (s), if known;

L. Transferring Custody [CFA 27.02]

- 1. The evidence technician shall respond directly to the laboratory when taking/transferring evidence to and from the laboratory. Blood evidence shall not be transported in the trunk of a vehicle.
- 2. Upon transferring items of evidentiary value to the FDLE laboratory, the contributor of the evidence shall initial the exam form in the space provided on the form to include [CFA 27.02 A.]:
 - a. Date.
 - b. Time.
 - c. Method of Transfer.
- 3. FDLE will provide the contributor with a "Case Tracking Form" for chain-of-custody purposes, including the following:
 - a. Name and location of the regional crime laboratory; synopsis of the event, and examinations desired [CFA 27.02 D].
 - b. Date, time, and receipt in the laboratory [CFA 27.02 E].
 - c. Name, signature and responsibility of the person in the laboratory receiving the evidence [CFA 27.02 B].
- 4. The evidence custodian will retain the case tracking form and attach the form to the white copy of the property receipt.
- 5. The evidence custodian shall be responsible for retrieving items of evidence from the laboratory.
- 6. The item of evidence will be placed back into the evidence vault or temporary storage locker.

M. Training

The evidence technician is the member of this agency who is tasked with the responsibility of detecting, collecting, and preserving physical evidence from crime scenes and shall receive specialized training as it relates to "crime scene processing". [CFA 27.03]

- 1. Detection and collection of latent fingerprints and palm prints.
- 2. Preparation and documentation of crime scene sketches.
- 3. Digital and conventional photography.
- 4. Collection, preservation, and submission of physical evidence, including biological materials.
- 5. Processing, storage, and security of digital evidence. Such training shall further include, if appropriate, the participation of the Department's Coordinator of Computer Applications.

Officers are trained in the detection of foot, tool, and tire impressions, but not in the collection of such evidence. If an incident requires the collection of such evidence, the Evidence Technician will be summoned to collect the evidence.

The Training Coordinator shall ensure that all sworn officers receive training on the procedures regarding copying, preservation, and storage of images, tapes or digital. It shall be the discretion of the Training Coordinator whether such training be accomplished as in-service, roll call, or specialized.

The Training Coordinator or other designee shall be responsible for scheduling and coordinating new and refresher training for the Evidence Technician in all pertinent areas of crime scene processing and evidence collection when new procedures or equipment are developed and appropriate training is offered by FDLE, this Department, and/or other law enforcement-related organizations. [CFA 27.03].

Glossary

Chain-Of-Custody - The transfer of evidence from one person or place to another.

Evidence - any substance or material found or recovered in connection with a criminal incident.

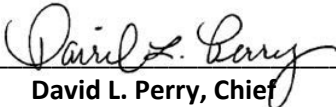
Evidence Technician - Person trained to process a crime scene for the collection of physical evidence, and to search for, develop, and collect fingerprints.

Sharps - Any object or device capable of puncturing the skin. Sharps include glass tubes, razor blades, scalpel blades, knives, hypodermic needles, and syringes.

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Attachment--None

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