



Standard Practice for Physical Evidence Labeling and Related Documentation¹

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1. Scope

1.1 This practice covers the labeling of physical evidence collected during field investigations; received by a forensic service provider (FSP); or isolated, generated, or prepared from items submitted to the FSP for examination.

1.2 Many types of physical evidence are hazardous. It is assumed that personnel assigned to the collection, packaging, storing, or analysis of physical evidence will take precautions as appropriate to the evidence.

1.3 *This practice is intended for use by competent forensic science practitioners with the requisite formal education, discipline-specific training (see Practice E2917), and demonstrated proficiency to perform forensic casework.*

1.4 *This standard does not purport to address all of the safety concerns, if any, associated with its use. It is the responsibility of the user of this standard to establish appropriate safety, health, and environmental practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use.*

1.5 *This international standard was developed in accordance with internationally recognized principles on standardization established in the Decision on Principles for the Development of International Standards, Guides and Recommendations issued by the World Trade Organization Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Committee.*

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 ASTM Standards:²

- E1188 Practice for Collection and Preservation of Information and Physical Items by a Technical Investigator
- E1492 Practice for Receiving, Documenting, Storing, and Retrieving Evidence in a Forensic Science Laboratory
- E1732 Terminology Relating to Forensic Science
- E2917 Practice for Forensic Science Practitioner Training, Continuing Education, and Professional Development Programs

¹ This practice is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee E30 on Forensic Sciences and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee E30.11 on Interdisciplinary Forensic Science Standards.

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² For referenced ASTM standards, visit the ASTM website, www.astm.org, or contact ASTM Customer Service at www.astm.org/contact. For *Annual Book of ASTM Standards* volume information, refer to the standard's Document Summary page on the ASTM website.

Continuing Education, and Professional Development Programs

2.2 Other Documents:

ISO/IEC 17025 General Requirements for the Competence of Testing and Calibration Laboratories³

3. Terminology

3.1 For definitions of terms used in this practice, refer to Terminology E1732.

4. Summary of Practice

4.1 Each individual item of evidence or its container is marked with a unique identifier which allows the origin of the item to be unequivocally established.

5. Significance and Use

5.1 By following the procedures specified in this practice, each item of physical evidence will have a traceable audit trail documented and maintained in a chain of custody.

6. Marking Evidence Upon Original Collection

6.1 See Practice E1188 for the collection and preservation of items.

6.2 Assign each item of evidence a unique identifier. Ensure that items cannot (1) be confused physically, and (2) be confused when referred to in records or other documents.

6.2.1 Similar evidence items may be collected as a group and assigned a single identifier (for example, pieces of broken glass from around northwest kitchen window, multiple swabs from the same body cavity, and latent prints from the driver side door).

6.2.2 Whenever possible, use sequential identifiers for evidence associated with a particular incident, event, or scene.

6.3 Document the location and condition of each item prior to collection.

6.4 Protect each item from loss, degradation, contamination, and alteration; and, wherever possible, seal the item in a tamper-evident container.

³ Available from International Organization for Standardization (ISO), ISO Central Secretariat, Chemin de Blandonnet 8, CP 401, 1214 Vernier, Geneva, Switzerland, <https://www.iso.org>.

6.5 Mark or tag each item or its container with the following information:

- 6.5.1 Item number,
- 6.5.2 Case or incident number,
- 6.5.3 Identification of the person who collected the item,
- 6.5.4 Date the item was collected, and
- 6.5.5 Brief description.

6.6 See Practice **E1492** for further information on packaging and storing the evidence.

7. Marking Sub-Items Produced During Examination in the Forensic Laboratory

7.1 Protect from loss, degradation, contamination, and alteration each item or portion of an item that is isolated, generated, or prepared during examination.

7.2 Mark the sub-item or its container with a unique identifier that can be traced to the original evidence number. Ensure that sub-items cannot (1) be confused physically, and (2) be confused with another (sub-)item when referred to in records or other documents.

8. Records

8.1 Create records contemporaneously and include:

- 8.1.1 Date of collection or receipt of evidence;
- 8.1.2 Method of packaging, marking, and storage (specifically referring to packaging, marking, or storage that might affect the integrity of the evidence);

8.1.3 Details on items produced during examination in the laboratory; and

8.1.4 Information regarding the transfer of items to another party or storage location. This is done to the level of detail required by the FSP's policies, which shall include, at a minimum, the identification of both parties involved in the transfer and the date of the transfer.

8.2 Regarding sub-items created in the laboratory, document in the laboratory records the following:

- 8.2.1 When the sub-item was isolated,
- 8.2.2 By whom,
- 8.2.3 What portion of the sample was isolated,
- 8.2.4 The sample designation and description, and
- 8.2.5 Packaging and storage conditions.

8.3 The following is an example of one way to describe and designate a series of items and sub-items:

Item 1—Coat
 Item 1-1—Debris removed from front of coat
 Item 1-1-1—Slide containing fiber(s) from debris
 Item 1-1-2—Bundle containing hair from debris
 Item 1-2—Debris from back of coat

9. Keywords

9.1 documentation; forensic science; labeling; physical evidence

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