



Designation: E1492 – 05

Standard Practice for Receiving, Documenting, Storing, and Retrieving Evidence in a Forensic Science Laboratory¹

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1. Scope

1.1 This practice describes procedures and techniques for protecting and documenting the integrity of items of physical evidence with respect to suitability for scientific testing, and admissibility as evidence in criminal or civil litigation.

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 *ASTM Standards*:²

E860 Practice for Examining And Preparing Items That Are Or May Become Involved In Criminal or Civil Litigation
E1459 Guide for Physical Evidence Labeling and Related Documentation

3. Significance and Use

3.1 Prior to being presented in court, a foundation must be established showing how evidence was collected, who collected the evidence, where it was collected, who has had custody of the evidence, how the evidence has been processed, and when changes of custody have occurred.

3.2 If the procedures outlined in this practice are followed, the chain of custody with respect to the evidence while it is in the custody of the forensic laboratory will be protected.

4. Procedure

4.1 *Identifying the Evidence*:

4.1.1 When evidence from a particular incident is first brought to the laboratory, assign it a unique numeric or alphanumeric case number, and use that case number to identify the submitted evidence and all subsequent items of evidence submitted from the same incident or case. Laboratory

numbering may adopt similar case numbers to those assigned by field investigators, consistent with Practice **E1459**.

4.1.1.1 Record case numbers in a permanent laboratory record along with the following information: case number, date the case was opened, and the submitter of the evidence.

4.1.1.2 If delivered in person, identify the person delivering the evidence and record that person's name in the record of the chain of custody.

4.1.1.3 Maintain a record of the chain of custody. Include in the record at least the following information: case number, item number, description, person submitting the evidence, person receiving the evidence, and date the evidence was received.

4.1.2 If requested, provide a signed evidence receipt to the submitter.

4.1.3 When a case number is assigned, create a case file identified by the case number.

4.1.4 In addition to the case number, identify each item with a sequential item number.

4.1.5 If evidence received is other than as stated on the container or accompanying documents, or if the condition of the evidence is not as stated on the accompanying documents or container document the discrepancy, and notify the client or submitting agency as soon as possible.

4.1.6 Retain any packaging material necessary to maintain the chain of custody or which may be relevant to the integrity of the evidence.

4.2 *Documenting Test Procedures*:

4.2.1 Each individual laboratory shall maintain a current record identifying what evidence is in the laboratory for analysis, its current status, and the date the evidence is removed from the laboratory.

4.2.2 Whenever practical, retain in a case file all notes, test data, and other documentation generated during the inspection of the sample. Otherwise, keep summary information or photocopies of original notes in the case file and refer to the location of the original documentation.

4.2.3 Retain copies of reports generated as the result of the examination or inspection of evidence in the case file.

4.3 *Documenting Alteration of Evidence*:

4.3.1 Do not alter a piece of evidence any more than is absolutely necessary to obtain a valid analysis.

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 service@astm.org. For *Annual Book of ASTM Standards* volume information, refer to the standard's Document Summary page on the ASTM website.