



Designation: E1492 – 11

# Standard Practice for Receiving, Documenting, Storing, and Retrieving Evidence in a Forensic Science Laboratory<sup>1</sup>

This standard is issued under the fixed designation E1492; the number immediately following the designation indicates the year of original adoption or, in the case of revision, the year of last revision. A number in parentheses indicates the year of last reapproval. A superscript epsilon ( $\epsilon$ ) indicates an editorial change since the last revision or reapproval.

## 1. Scope

1.1 This practice describes procedures and techniques for a forensic science laboratory to protect and document the integrity of items of physical evidence with respect to suitability for scientific testing, and admissibility as evidence in litigation.

1.2 This practice recommends generally accepted professional principles and operations, although the facts and issues of each situation require consideration, and frequently involve matters not expressly dealt with herein. Deviations from this practice should be based on specific articulable circumstances.

1.3 This practice offers a set of instructions for performing one or more specific operations. This standard cannot replace knowledge, skill or ability acquired through appropriate education, training, and experience and should be used in conjunction with sound professional judgment.

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 and health practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use.*

## 2. Referenced Documents

2.1 *ASTM Standards:*<sup>2</sup>

**E860 Practice for Examining And Preparing Items That Are Or May Become Involved In Criminal or Civil Litigation**

**E1188 Practice for Collection and Preservation of Information and Physical Items by a Technical Investigator**

**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 col-

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<sup>2</sup> 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.

lected 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 Following the procedures outlined in this practice can serve to protect the chain of custody of the evidence while the evidence is at the forensic laboratory. Refer to Practice E1188 for chain of custody information and procedures prior to submission to the laboratory.

## 4. Procedure

4.1 *Receiving and Identifying the Evidence:*

4.1.1 When evidence from a particular incident is first brought to the laboratory, assign a unique numeric or alphanumeric laboratory case number, and use that case number when identifying the submitted evidence as well as all subsequent items of evidence submitted to the laboratory 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 the laboratory case number in a permanent laboratory record along with the following information: submitting agency and agency case number, date the case was received at the laboratory, name of the person receiving the evidence, and a listing of the items.

4.1.1.2 Identify the person delivering the evidence and record that person's name in the record of the chain of custody when evidence is delivered in person. Document shipping and receipt information for evidence received through a public carrier.

4.1.1.3 Items, or areas of items, that require protection from loss, cross-transfer or contamination shall be submitted in a sealed condition or sealed immediately upon receipt at the laboratory. When requested, the laboratory staff shall provide instructions to the submitter in proper methods of packaging evidence.

4.1.1.4 A laboratory employee competent to evaluate the material shall determine whether improper packaging has diminished or destroyed the value of the material for laboratory analysis.

4.1.1.5 If an item is submitted to the laboratory that has no apparent value, or diminished value as evidence, then the laboratory shall still take the necessary steps to preserve the