



Designation: E 1188 – 95

Standard Practice for Collection and Preservation of Information and Physical Items by a Technical Investigator¹

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1. Scope

1.1 This practice covers guidelines for the collection and preservation of information and physical items by any technical investigator pertaining to an incident that can be reasonably expected to be the subject of litigation.

1.2 For additional standards promulgated by ASTM Committee E-30, see Practices E 620, E 678, E 860, and E 1020.

1.3 *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:

E 620 Practice for Reporting Opinions of Technical Experts²

E 678 Practice for Evaluation of Technical Data²

E 860 Practice for Examining and Testing Items That Are or May Become Involved in Litigation²

E 1020 Practice for Reporting Incidents²

3. Significance and Use

3.1 This practice is intended for use by any technical investigator when investigating an incident that can be reasonably expected to be the subject of litigation. The intent is to obtain sufficient information and physical items to discover evidence associated with the incident and to preserve it for later analysis.

3.2 The quality of evidence may change with time, therefore, special effort should be taken to preserve it. This practice sets forth guidelines for the collection and preservation of evidence for further analysis.

3.3 Evidence that has been collected and preserved shall be identified with and traceable to the incident. This practice sets forth guidelines for such procedures.

4. Procedure

4.1 *Documentary Information*—Collect information related to events and conditions occurring before, during, or after the incident. Documentary information may be held by any entity associated with the incident. Make a broad search to identify documents and, where possible, collect them. Obtain statements as early as feasible from all individuals associated with the incident and recovery activity.

4.2 *Physical Evidence*—Obtain and preserve physical items as early as possible. Plan the investigation to protect physical evidence significant to the incident. The plan should consider the possibility of identity loss, physical loss, deterioration or destruction of information due to environmental effect, or recovery and collection activities. When physical items cannot be preserved in their found state, document it.

4.3 *Photographic Documentation*—Commence photographic documentation as soon as possible after the incident. Document the scene of the incident and the condition of items involved. If items involved in the incident are disassembled or subjected to destructive testing, each step of the disassembly or testing shall be documented by contemporaneous photographs or videotaping. The preferable photographic technique provides negatives that can be reproduced and enlarged. The date, time, and location of the photography or videotaping, and identity of the photographer or videotaper, shall be recorded.

4.4 *Validation and Authentication*—Evidence and information gathered by investigators must be admissible in the event of litigation. Validity and authenticity must be established and the chain of custody traceable. Validity and authenticity of evidence is established by documentation that defines the relationship of the evidence to the incident. Such documentation includes, but is not limited to, the following:

4.4.1 *Initial Collection Information.*

4.4.1.1 Identity of the evidence and any unique labeling,

4.4.1.2 Location where the evidence was found,

4.4.1.3 Date and time the evidence was found or obtained,

and

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 *Annual Book of ASTM Standards*, Vol 14.02.