



Designation: E1188 – 11

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 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. Significance and Use

2.1 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 analysis.

2.2 The quality of evidence may change with time, therefore, special effort should be taken to capture and preserve evidence in an expeditious manner. This practice sets forth guidelines for the collection and preservation of evidence for further analysis.

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

3. Procedure

3.1 *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 the recovery activity.

3.2 *Physical Evidence:*

3.2.1 Plan the investigation to protect physical evidence significant to the incident. The plan should consider the possibility of identity loss, physical loss, or the deterioration or destruction of information due to environmental effects or the recovery and collection activities. For each item considered to be significant to the incident, document, collect and preserve physical items and their information content as soon as possible.

3.2.2 Document conditions that prevent or interfere with the preservation of any potential evidence in the state in which it was found. This might include hazardous or accessibility conditions, weather conditions, or other existing complications.

3.2.3 Assign a unique identifier to each item collected and include this information in a label securely attached to the item or as documentation on the item's container and enter the identifying information on a log sheet together with a brief description of the item. The evidence documentation should also clearly include any specific details necessary for preservation of the item, such as temperature control or special handling instructions.

3.3 *Photographic Documentation:*

3.3.1 Commence photographic documentation as soon as possible after the incident. Document the scene of the incident and the condition of items involved.

3.3.2 Potential evidence should be photographed in the position where it is first observed by the investigator. If items involved in the incident are disassembled or subjected to

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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