



Designation: E 1492 – 92 (Reapproved 1999)

## 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 E 1492; 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 protecting and documenting the integrity of physical evidence with respect to suitability for scientific testing, and admissibility as evidence in criminal or civil litigation.

### 2. Summary of Practice

2.1 Physical evidence is provided with a traceable paper trail documenting the chain of custody and processes to which the evidence has been subjected.

### 3. Significance and Use

3.1 Prior to its presentation 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, 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.

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 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 container or piece of evidence with a sequential item number.

4.1.5 In the event evidence which is 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 container or accompanying documents, document and photograph the evidence and packaging, and notify the client or submitting agency as soon as possible.

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

#### 4.2 Documentation of Testing 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 Alteration of Evidence:

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

4.3.1.1 It is recognized that there are some types of analyses which require the consumption or substantial alteration of the evidence. Carefully document such consumption or alteration of the evidence.

4.3.2 Whenever possible, and when the accuracy of the analysis will not be affected, maintain an adequate portion of the evidence for testing by other methods or other laboratories.

4.3.3 Package samples in containers, and store in a manner which will maintain the sample in the same condition in which it was submitted to the laboratory.

<sup>1</sup> 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.

Current edition approved August 15, 1992. Published November 1992.