



# HANDLING OF COMMON TYPES OF PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

**INDEX CODE: 1203.3**  
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Contents:

- I. Purpose
- II. Types of Physical Evidence
- III. Proponent Unit
- IV. Cancellation

## **I. PURPOSE**

The following is a list of the most common types of physical evidence and the appropriate instructions for their handling, marking, packaging and collection of known samples.

## **II. TYPES OF PHYSICAL EVIDENCE**

- A. Anonymous Letters (bank robbery notes, extortion, etc.)  
Retain all original documents, place in transparent letter envelope. Do not handle with bare hands, advise if evidence should be treated for latent prints. Initial and date each document.
- B. Bullets (not cartridges)  
Initial base, nose or mutilated area, pack the same as for cartridges, label container.
- C. Clothing  
Mark directly on clothes, or use a tag, each article will be individually wrapped and labeled, if wet hang to dry.
- D. Clothing/Fabric (stained)  
Use a tag to identify or mark directly on clothes. If wet, hang up to dry, avoid exposing to direct sunlight. Note presence of obvious stain in description of item.
- E. Cartridges (live ammunition)  
Use pillbox, pack tightly in soft paper, label container.
- F. Cartridge Cases (shells)  
Initial on inside rim of case near the bullet end, pack the cases the same as for live ammunition, label container.
- G. Charred or Burned Documents  
Pack in rigid container between loose layers of cotton, label outside and indicate fragile nature of contents.
- H. Fibers  
Submit the entire garment or cloth item in a tightly sealed container, label outside of container.
- I. Firearms  
Unload all weapons being careful to preserve any prints (if necessary). Initial as inconspicuously as possible, string tag the gun, indicate in your notes where the gun was marked.

- J. Gunshot Residues  
Contact the Evidence Collection Unit
- K. Glass Particles  
Place in a pillbox or plastic vial, seal and protect against breakage, label the container.
- L. Hair
1. Knowns: At least 25 are needed from the head and different parts of the body for a comparison.
  2. Unknowns (questioned): The investigator should collect what is available at the scene. The hairs, which have been collected, will be placed in folder paper with all edges and openings sealed with tape. Label the container.
- M. Knives  
Initial on end of handle or near hilt of blade, place in a **box**, preserve for fingerprints (if necessary) and label the **box**.
- N. Medicine  
Suspicious death may be associated with use or alleged misuse of patent or prescription medicines. If there is an indication of this early in the investigation, take possession of the medicines and treat them as evidence until a determination is made. Label all containers.
- O. Paint Chips
1. Known Samples: Samples should be chipped off, not scraped. For comparison at least a one-half square inch of solid areas, with all layers represented, will be needed. Pack ships in a pharmacy fold first, then in a pillbox or small plastic vial with a screw top and seal. Label the container.
  2. Unknown Samples (recovered evidence): Collect whatever is available at the scene and package as indicated above.
- P. Plaster Casts  
Shoes and tires will be required for a comparative examination. Casts must be packed to prevent breakage, label casts with identifying data before they harden. Such specimens should be handled by the Evidence Collection Unit.
- Q. Shoe Print Lifts (impressions on hard surfaces)  
Contact the Evidence Collection Unit
- R. Safe Insulation  
Take samples from all damaged areas of the safe. Use pharmacy fold first, then pack in a pillbox or plastic vial, avoid use of glass container and envelopes.
- S. Soils and Minerals  
Submit samples from near the pertinent spot. Use a pillbox or plastic vial. Label container.
- T. Tools  
Use a string tag, wrap each tool separately, preserve for prints if necessary. Indicate type of examination required.
- U. Toolmarks  
Comparative examinations can be performed if the tool has been recovered. If not, other examinations can be made. Casts and photographs should be taken. Pack each item individually with a tag.

If you are unsure about the collecting and preservation of any type of evidence contact the Evidence Collection Unit before proceeding any further.

**III. PROPONENT UNIT:** Evidence Collection & Identification Unit.

**IV CANCELLATION:** This directive cancels Index Code 1203.3, dated 07-01-07.