

General Evidence Packaging and Submission Guidelines Tip Sheet

Johnson County Sheriff's Office Criminalistics Laboratory

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General Packaging Tips

- Evidence packaging must be at least 6” on one side.
 - Plastic bags smaller than sandwich bags are NOT appropriate.
 - Do not roll up or fold over paper bags; simply fold and seal at the top only.
 - Swab boxes must be packaged inside another paper bag.
 - Glass containers should be avoided—if necessary, they should be packaged inside another non-breakable container (paint can, plastic container) to prevent breakage.
 - Evidence that has any biohazardous material on it (blood, etc.) must be clearly marked on the outer packaging with a BIOHAZARD sticker.
- Paper bags, plastic zip-type bags and manila envelopes of an appropriate size are all good choices.
- Manila clear window envelopes are *ideal packaging* as they are a breathable container, but also allow viewing of the contents.

Sealing the Evidence

- A package is properly sealed if:
 - It prevents loss, cross-transfer or contamination of the evidence.
 - Entering the container results in obvious damage/alteration to the container or seal
- The seal must consist of evidence tape, self-sealing evidence bags or heat seals. Please ensure when using evidence tape that the tape completely covers open seams/edges of the container.
- Initials or other identification of the sealer (badge number, etc) must be ON or ACROSS the seal.

Filling out the Submission Sheet

- A crime lab submission sheet documents the examination requests and is required to accompany all evidence.
- All portions of the submission sheet should be complete and legible; this includes agency case number, offense, victim/suspect names, investigating agency and officer.
- A victim name or other identifier must be present on all submission sheets.
- Individual evidence items must be packaged and listed separately.
- The chain of custody is required with a signature – not just a badge number
- Requested exams should be specific so the analyst knows exactly what needs to be done, eliminating unnecessary calls to the investigator.
- Please include a case synopsis for any clarifications needed or case numbers that would be associated to the case being submitted if this would aid the examiner with their analysis. **A case synopsis is REQUIRED for any items being submitted for Biology/DNA, Trace Evidence or Digital/Multimedia examinations. This synopsis should be detailed and include all of the pertinent details regarding the evidence being submitted (where it was collected, etc).**

Rush Requests

- Rush cases need to notate why they are rushes and per whom.
- Cases noted as “rush” need to include the court date so we can be sure to complete the analysis before it is needed.

Examination Specific Packaging Tips

Biology/DNA:

- All items with a BIO request must be packaged in paper bags/envelopes. The only exception is for a syringe which must first be in a syringe tube.
- When packaging DNA swabs in boxes, the swab boxes must be packaged in paper bags – not plastic.
- Any wet or bloody items submitted for Biology/DNA analysis should be packaged in paper to prevent decomposition.

Controlled Substances:

- Bongs, beer cans, soda cans, etc should be emptied and evidence should be dry before submission.
- Fresh vegetation, mushrooms or other materials which could rot should be packaged in paper so they don't decompose and mildew.
- Suspected PCP or butane honey oil must be packaged in arson packaging (arson bag or paint can)
- Syringes must be packaged in clear, puncture proof packaging (i.e. syringe tube). The syringe tube should be packaged inside another container; ideally a window envelope, but a plastic bag is acceptable as long as no BIO exam is required
- We do check for the absence or presence of alcohol in liquids (not blood); however, we do not quantitate the alcohol.

Latent Prints:

- When submitting latent lifts, please supply information on where the lifts came from.

Firearms/Tool Marks:

- Any firearm submitted to the laboratory may be test fired regardless of whether or not you have requested firearms testing.
- Firearms must always be *unloaded* and in a safe condition.
- Firearms should be submitted properly secured in a cardboard gun box (only one per box). They should not be submitted rolled in paper, in hard plastic cases, zippered pouches or other firearm carriers. If a carrying case of some kind is collected, submit it separately if other laboratory testing (Biology/Latent Prints) is desired; it is not needed for a firearms examination.
 - Semi-auto guns should be properly secured with a plastic zip-tie in the gun so it goes through the magazine well and out the ejection port.
 - Revolvers should be properly secured with a plastic zip-tie through one of the chambers or around the crane (part that is hinged).
 - Metal objects should NOT be used to secure the chamber!
- Do not place anything down the barrel of the gun.
- Loose ammunition (if submitted) should be packaged separately and not allowed to be loose in the box with the gun. Generally, ammunition is not necessary for laboratory testing unless distance determination is being requested, or the ammunition is a rare or old caliber.

Digital/Multimedia:

- Ensure you have submitted a completed Digital/Multimedia Evidence Submission form with a copy of the legal authority attached.
- When submitting digital evidence (photos, videos, etc.) on a temporary media that you want back (USB drive, etc.), the submission sheet must list the actual digital evidence (i.e. "digital photos" or "video files") – not the storage media.
- All evidence submitted for DME analysis must be sealed inside an anti-static bag (provided at the laboratory)

Toxicology:

- Although refrigeration of the sample is not required prior to submission, storage in extreme temperatures should be avoided.
- Do not tightly roll the zip-type bag around the blood tube; simply place the tube in the bag, hand-seal the zip-type closure, then seal the open end of the bag using evidence tape (from side to side, not front to

back).

- Do not place evidence tape across the stopper of the blood tube; seal the plastic sleeve instead.
- If the subject is in possession of or makes reference to the use of certain drugs/medications, please include this information on the toxicology submission form.
- When submitting urine, do not wrap the cup inside latex gloves. Instead, use a zip-type bag to contain the cup (and possible urine leakage).

Trace Evidence:

Be specific with chemical analysis requests. We do not analyze for poison.

We do not accept or analyze explosives – contact the ATF directly.

Hairs:

- For questioned hairs which are visible, collect with sterile tweezers and package in glassine envelope inside a larger manila envelope.
- Package trace lifts of large items inside a manila envelope. Multiple trace lifts can be packaged inside a single envelope as long as the lifts are completely sealed and properly labeled to identify the specific location for each lift.
- Package individual garments or bedding separately in appropriately sized envelopes or paper bags.
- For known hair standards, collect on a clean piece of white paper and use a pharmacy fold after collection is completed. Include the comb with the hairs. Package in larger manila envelope. Package each hair standard type (e.g., head, facial, pubic) as separate items.

Fibers:

- Package trace lifts of large items inside a manila envelope. Multiple trace lifts can be packaged inside a single envelope as long as the lifts are completely sealed and properly labeled to identify the specific location for each lift.
- Package individual garments or bedding separately in appropriately sized envelopes or paper bags.
- For known standard fabric cuttings, package in a coin envelope inside a larger manila envelope. Multiple fabric standards from a single room or vehicle can be packaged inside a single envelope as long as the fabric standards are in individual properly labeled coin envelopes which have been sealed with evidence tape to prevent cross-contamination.

Paint:

- Package paint chips in a wax envelope inside a manila envelope or in a plastic container. Package Q and K separately and clearly label the samples. If using a razor blade to collect the sample, include it in the packaging and label that it is present.
- **For paint on clothing** – if smears are present, collect the whole item. If chips are present, carefully remove them and package each chip separately. DO NOT collect paint with hinge lifts or tape lifts.
- For paint transfers on tools, weapons, bats, or other “manageable” items, package entire item inside a cardboard box, paper bag, or plastic bag.

Glass:

- **For a glass fracture match** – collect all samples present. Label the sides of glass (inside/outside) and if removed from a frame label the area it came from (top/bottom/left/right). Wrap each piece separately in cotton. Pack in a sturdy container to prevent shifting and breaking. Identify container as FRAGILE.
- **Glass standard** – collect samples from all panes of a window and from what is left in the frame (ground pieces are a last resort).
- **For glass on tools or clothing** – send in the entire item to the lab (fragments might be too small to see). If there are visible fragments, place them in a secure package or tape lift.

Tape:

- When possible, leave the tape adhering to the substrate or loosely stick the tape (adhesive side down) onto acetate sheets or transparency sheets. Notify us if a tape comparison is wanted; this will have to be done before latent print processing. If the tape is bloody or putrid do not wrap tightly. Try not to distort or tear the tape; best to cut it for removal with proper documentation.

Fracture Match:

- Always protect the fractured edges (packing paper or paper towel can be used). Gun boxes work well for packaging as well as the tube containers that are used to package knives. Package Q and K separately and make sure they are clearly labeled.

General Unknowns:

- **For Clan Lab samples** – contact the Sheriff's Office Clan Lab Response Team.
- **For Acid/Base bottle bombs** – package the plastic bottle in a plastic bag. DO NOT use a paint can or a nylon bag. Package any liquid in a glass vial inside a plastic bottle. Wear gloves for safety and clearly label the items.
- **For unknown powders or unknown liquids** – package the evidence in a glass vial inside a plastic bottle. Clearly label the items.

Condoms/Lubricants:

- Collect any condoms and unopened packages from the scene. If body fluids or water is present, package in paper envelopes (double-up packaging). Do not package in plastic bags. Notify us quickly so the evidence can be frozen (dried out and brittle is hard to work with).

Miscellaneous:

- **For soil samples** – submit all of the clothing if soil is found on it. For a soil standard, collect a representative handful of the soil at various different points at the scene.
- **For building material** – collect samples that are still remaining in place of origin (e.g. wall) and not on the ground. Collect samples close to the damage. Package the material in a druggist fold so that no creases are present for the material to escape.

Arson Evidence:

- **Containers:** Appropriate evidence containers are paint cans (unlined preferred), glass vials (with Teflon liners-AKA "clan lab" vials) and nylon "arson" bags or AMPAC© bags.
- **Space:** Fill the container (cans, arson bags) from approximately 50% to no more than 75% of their capacity. The extraction techniques used in this laboratory require headspace in the containers.
- **Seal:** Seal the paint cans with tape going ACROSS the lid and preferably not surrounding the lid. Nylon bags require a heat seal (double bagged and double sealed preferred). The lab requires, at a minimum, your initials or badge number on the seal.
- **Labeling the Evidence:** Label both the can and the lid with appropriate information. The lid needs only needs enough identification to match it to the can.



- **Large Items:** Fire debris evidence bags may be useful for large, bulky items. Some items may need to be cut (use non-gas powered tools!) to properly fit into a paint can. Place the area of interest on TOP, especially for clothing.
- **Soil:** Soil samples should be frozen (or at least refrigerated) as soon as possible after collection and until submitted to the laboratory. Bacteria in the soil will degrade certain ignitable liquid residues if present! Be sure to tell the property clerk at the lab that the evidence needs to be kept frozen until analysis and note "soil" on submission sheet
- **Liquids:** Transfer liquids from the containers found at the scene to a smaller glass vial. Place glass vial inside a secondary container (paint can/plastic vial) to prevent breakage.
- **Liquid Residues:** If the object cannot be submitted by itself, then use a sterile, dry absorbent material (swab, gauze, tampon) to wipe the container/area, then package the swabbing material into a can or glass vial.
- **Comparison Samples:** If an item such as gauze or swab is used to collect evidence, an unused, clean sample of that item should be submitted in separate can as well as a lab comparison sample.