



# INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR PROPERTY AND EVIDENCE, INC.

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Articles may refer to Standards that have been rewritten since the original magazine was first published.

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The

# Evidence Log<sup>®</sup>

is the Official Publication of the International Association for Property and Evidence, Inc.



## IN THIS ISSUE:

- *Pulling Perishibles*
- *What a Difference a Class Makes*
- *10 Reasons to Use Bar Codes*
- *Dialogue with Property & Evidence Professionals*
- *Standard #14: Other "Special Handling" Evidence*
- *Lee County (FL): Search for an Evidence Tracking System*

Volume 2005, Number 3



## **This is not the way to manage your Property & Evidence Room! ...Don't let your CAD/RMS vendor's promises drive you into the wall!**

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# IN THIS ISSUE

**Letter from the Executive Director**  
*Rising from the ashes!*  
 Joseph T. Latta

Page 3

**Dialogue of Property Professionals**  
*What do you have to say for our next issues?*

Page 48

**Other "Special Handling" Evidence**  
*IAPE Property Standard #14*

Page 4

**Headline Highlights**  
*These are excerpts you won't want to miss!*

Page 51

**Pulling Perishibles**  
*How to REALLY keep your property room orderly*  
 Ronnie Garrett, Law Enforcement Technology

Page 12

**Bits and Pieces**

Page 52

**I.A.P.E. Property & Evidence  
 Management Class Information**

Page 24-25

**What a Difference a Class Makes!**  
*Great examples of ingenuity & economy*  
 By David Rentelman, Pasco (WA) Police Dept.

Page 55

**Read This ... and Be An Author!**

Page 26

**I.A.P.E. Member Application**

Page 57

**Lee County, Florida: Search for an  
 Evidence Tracking System**  
 By Sanna Barry, Dir. of Marketing, Vuetura, Inc.

Page 28

**Rest in Peace**  
*Faithful IAPE member "Angie" Gast, 53, dies in Alaska*

Page 60

**Certified Property & Evidence Specialist**  
*IAPE Certification Information and Application*

Page 34-35

**Advertiser Index**  
*Check out your favorite vendor.*

Page 60

**I've Got Something You Don't Have**  
*What have you got in YOUR Property Room?*

Page 46

**10 Reasons Why to Use Bar Codes**  
*Start your "Countdown" to efficiency!*  
 By Shannon Turner, CPES, FileOnQ

Page 55

**I.A.P.E.**

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## IAPE Property and Evidence Standards

### Standard #14: Other Special-Handling Evidence

#### Cold Storage

Certain classes of property require special treatment for reasons totally separate from their value as evidence. These items may be dangerous, difficult to package or store, or perishable. The fact that an item is hazardous, difficult to package, or perishable causes no reduction whatsoever on the necessity for maintaining the chain of custody while it is held.

For this reason, the storage of perishable items is strongly discouraged, and should only be performed when it is evidence of a very serious crime. It is important to note that freezer space is extremely limited in many agencies and should be reserved for the preservation of DNA related evidence only when it is inappropriate to store these items in a room temperature controlled environment (65° to 75°).

Refrigerators and freezers should be equipped with alarms that indicate if the temperature rises above a designated threshold level. Contamination due to thawing after an equipment malfunction is unacceptable. The alarm should be monitored in a 24-hour location, such as the communications center.

Some items, such as those containing liquid blood samples, should not be frozen and may require refrigeration instead. Again, it is important to minimize these cases, as refrigerator space is also extremely limited in many agencies. Some blood sample vials have a preservative and may be stored at room temperature. Check with the local crime lab for local storage requirements.

#### Flammable Substances

By definition, a "flammable" is virtually anything that is easily set on fire. The storage of flammables should therefore be in an area away from the regular or indoor storage facility.

The following suggests the minimum standards for the storage of flammables:

- ❖ Location should be outside the main building, such as within a bulk storage area.
- ❖ Sealed (new) metal cans should be used to store arson evidence.
- ❖ Other containers may be used if they have airtight lids.
- ❖ Larger quantities of flammables should be referred to the local Fire Department for disposal. Photos and samples of the material should generally suffice.
- ❖ A metal storage cabinet or an explosion-proof locker specifically designed for this purpose can be utilized for the containment of flammables. The cabinet should have a locking mechanism, and should clearly be labeled "Flammable".
- ❖ Storage scheme should be consistent with that of the overall property room scheme.
- ❖ Small quantities of fireworks may be kept in such a cabinet if the aggregate total of powder does not make it a destructive device. Explosives should never be stored in the Property Room, but should always be referred to the local bomb squad for disposal.
- ❖ In any area where flammables of any kind are stored, it is highly recommended that fire extinguishers, an adequate fire sprinkler system, and an action plan are readily available.

#### Syringes and Sharps

It is important to remember that the cut or puncture caused by a syringe, knife, or other sharp object is of significant concern due to the risk of infection from whatever biological or chemical contaminant may be on the sharp.

continued as **Other Specials** on page 8

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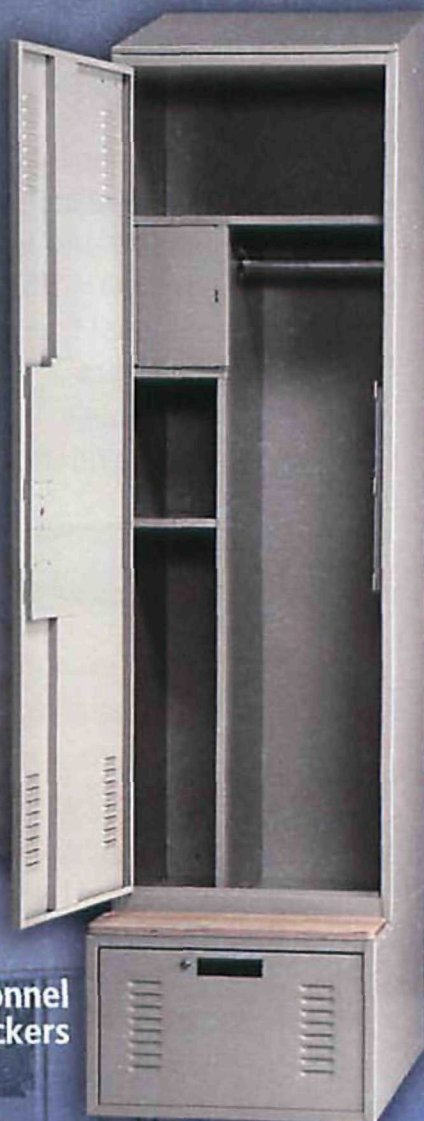
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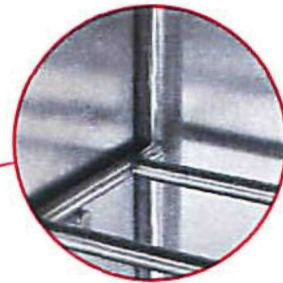
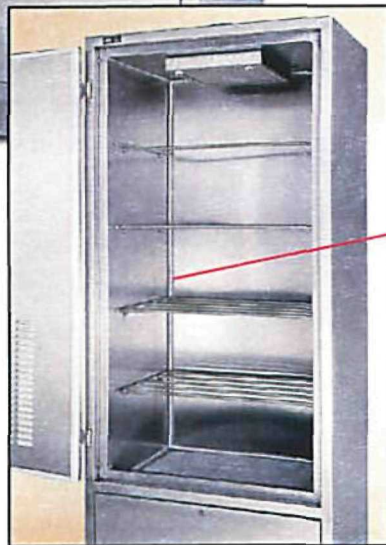
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### Other Specials . . . from page 4

Syringes in general are being booked into evidence substantially less frequently now that their hazard is well known. They almost never are presented as evidence in court. Consult with the prosecutor to evaluate if the criminal case in question can proceed with a photograph and dispose of the syringe in a medically approved manner.

The hazard from syringes and sharps is very real, and directives need to insure that all needles are securely contained in an appropriate marked sharps container.

#### **Bulk Items & Vehicles**

A bulk item can be defined as any item that cannot be stored readily in the regular storage area due to size. It includes items such as tires, vehicle parts, carts, lawn equipment, bikes, etc.

It is recommended that an outside area be designed, or large warehouse obtained, to meet these suggested requirements:

- ❖ Bulk area should be enclosed by material that would prevent unwarranted entry such as a block wall with a standard metal gate.
- ❖ Area should be away from public view.
- ❖ Area should be such that items stored within would be protected from the elements.
- ❖ Gates should be able to accommodate large items.
- ❖ Storage scheme should be consistent with the overall scheme of the property unit.
- ❖ An intrusion alarm is suggested for such a building.
- ❖ The bulk storage area may also be partitioned for the storage of vehicles.
- ❖ Sufficient lighting should be provided for necessary security.

In the event that vehicles cannot be accommodated, a contract with a reputable tow yard for towing and storage is acceptable, if and only if the site remains secure, even from tow yard employees. Periodic inspections to ensure the preservation of said vehicles would be suggested. An alternative is to have a surplus cargo container for the temporary storage of a vehicle used in a major crime. This will ensure controlled access, but keep in mind that these containers have the possibility of extreme temperature variations.

#### **Long, Slender Items**

The storage of long, slender items such as poles, clubs, rods, sticks, batons, and the like have always created a nightmare for storing within the property room. This particular type of item usually ends up stacked one on top of another or standing up in a barrel, causing identifying tags to be damaged and creating huge problems when trying to retrieve them.

One solution to eliminate this would be an easily constructed box with a wire crosshatch at the top and near the bottom to allow items to stand up in an identifiable grid section. Another suggestion to store items vertically is to utilize large diameter agricultural PVC pipe. Items may also be stored horizontally on a shelf when the items are placed in case or chronological order. Yet another suggestion is to hang long items from a pegboard with rubber stretchcord. Whichever method is utilized, ensure that the items are in some type of order and easily retrieved.

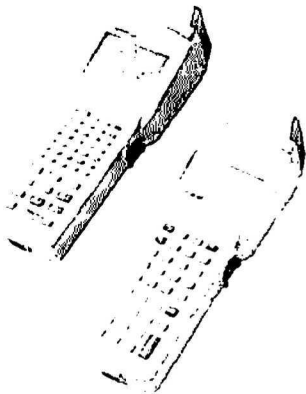
#### **Bicycles**

Exterior storage is common, but not recommended because it leaves the risk of damage to the bike from exposure to the weather. Interior storage is recommended to avoid potential liability for damage due to weather exposure. Consider the use of hooks on an overhead pipe from which to hang bicycles to maximize space efficiency. Always separate bikes by evidence, found property and safekeeping.

continued as **Other Specials** on page 11

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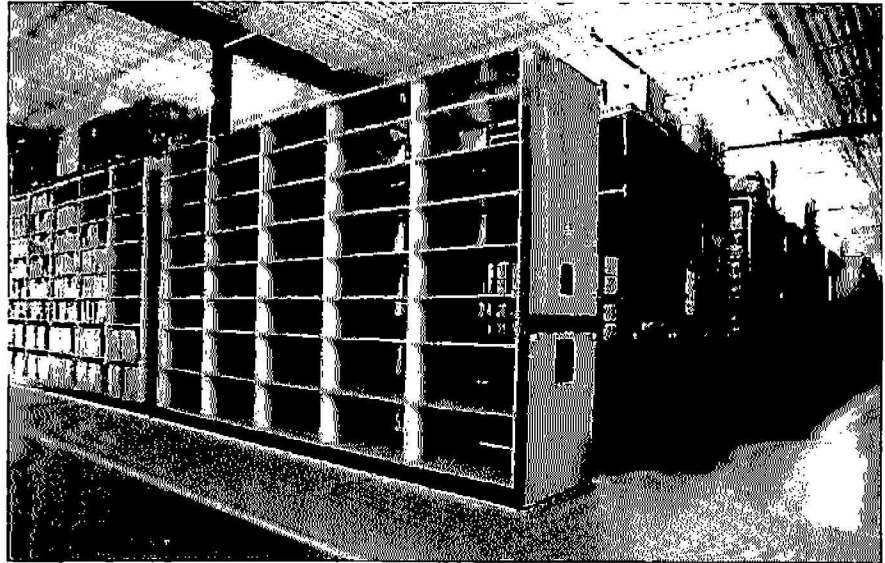
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**Other Specials . . . from page 8**

**Alcohol and Alcoholic Beverages**

There are two considerations that need attention in most agencies related to the storage of alcohol and similar liquids. The first is a policy to reduce the overall need for alcohol to be stored as evidence, and the second is the procedure for the actual storage of the item presented as evidence.

It is an accepted fact that alcohol is rarely admitted in court as evidence. This holds true for kegs and cases as well as for individual bottles. Storing this contraband only hampers the efficient operation of the property room. A policy supporting the field dumping of alcohol at the location of the detention should be developed. Such a policy should include a mandate that the alcohol is actually destroyed in the presence of the violator. A photograph of the evidence container is preferable to actually booking the can or bottle. Consult with the local prosecutor prior to changing policy.

If the alcohol is part of the probable cause for an arrest, or is related in another critical way to another more serious crime, the evidence should be handled like any other evidence. Another situation prompting caution would be in the case of alcohol that has been seized pursuant to a liquor license violation. The evidence should be disposed once the criminal violation has been completed unless there is a specific request from the administrative licensing body.

If there is a need to store the alcohol as evidence, consider whether a sample of the beverage would be sufficient to take for analysis and/or evidence, and then whether the container is necessary as evidence.

On occasion, larger quantities of beer at teen parties are seized in keg quantities. These kegs are often seized to punish the party host, and not necessarily to hold the item as evidence. It is

continued as **Other Specials** on page 12

## Gun, Rifle and Knife Boxes

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# Pulling Perishables

By Ronnie Garrett, Law Enforcement Technology

What do grocery stores and property rooms have in common? Plenty, says Lt. Joe Latta, executive director and lead instructor for the International Association for Property & Evidence. Before becoming a police officer in Burbank, California, where he later spent nine years overseeing its property room, Latta worked in the grocery industry.

He has discovered that like a grocery store, property room shelves overflow with “perishable” items having a fairly short shelf life, and pulling these “perishables” from the shelves should be an ongoing process. Unfortunately, it’s a task Latta finds many departments neglect.

But rotating stock and disposing of items kept past their expiration dates keeps inventory at a manageable level, he stresses. “There is no right way to purge, but there is a wrong way, and that is not to do it.”

**Taking stock** In a retail setting, managing your inventory means keeping shelves well stocked without being over stocked. Holding an item on the shelves unnecessarily takes up space and the result is

over stocking, a common problem in property rooms across the country. Much of the evidence being stored in today’s property rooms no longer holds value to any case. In fact, just 2 percent of a property room’s inventory ever winds up in the courtroom.

“If 98 percent of what you’re bringing in never goes to court, and you don’t get rid of anything, the property room becomes like a volcano that’s ready to erupt at any time,” Latta says. “Our biggest problem is probably the purging process and keeping stuff we don’t need.” Latta describes a scenario involving a suspicious vehicle driven by two kids. Upon stopping the motorist and searching the car, it appears likely the teens are auto burglars — there are at least a half-dozen Autovox radios sitting in the trunk.

The officer seizes everything in the vehicle as evidence; and nearly 100 items find their way to the property room. Item No. 1 is a pair of pliers; Item No. 2, some channel locks; No. 3, a set of speakers, No. 4, a screwdriver; No. 5, a stereo and so on.

continued as **Perishables** on page 14

## Other Specials . . . from page 11

strongly recommended that this practice cease and that the beer be dumped at the scene instead of being booked as found property.

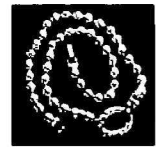
### Jewelry

Jewelry consisting of fine metals, precious and semi-precious stones should all be handled with enhanced security in a manner consistent with its perceived value. Each piece of fine jewelry, or suspected fine jewelry should be individually documented and packaged. Storage should be relegated to an area with enhanced security, such as the currency vault.

### Coin Collections / Stamp Collections

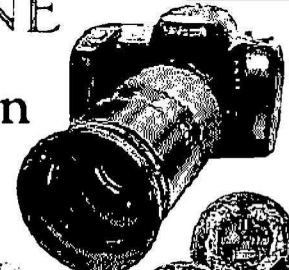
Collections of stamps, coins, baseball cards, and any other item of potential value greater than its face value should be stored in an area with enhanced security similar to that provided for currency. Any-time collections are to be disposed of they should be appraised first to determine the fair market value. ♦

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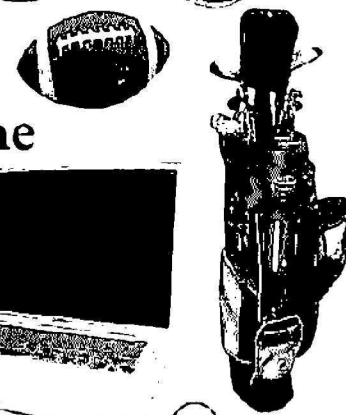


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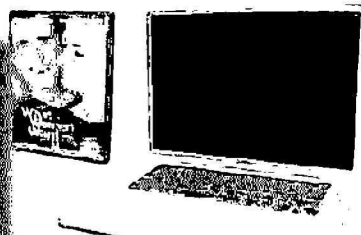
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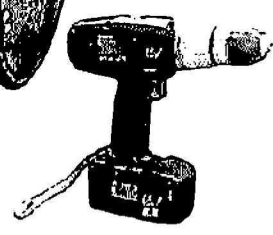
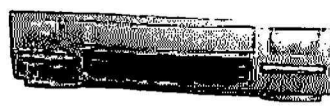
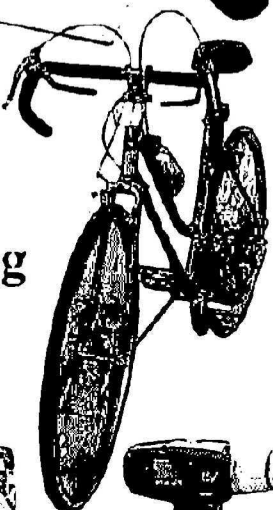
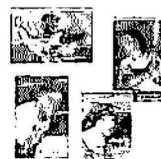
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### Perishables . . . from page 12

Upon further investigation, the detective finds he can link just one victim in a single crime to some of the evidence. This victim's property might be exhibited at trial, but the remaining evidence will likely stay in the property room — unless the department has a good review system in place.

Other issues further underscore dates as a method to keep inventory at a manageable level, he stresses. "There is no right way to purge, but there is a wrong way and that is not to do it."

Other issues further underscore the need for better inventory management.

Prominent among these is the wave to warehouse, and even freeze, DNA evidence. Many states now require law enforcement agencies to hold DNA evidence indefinitely.

The Innocence Project (view their website at [www.InnocenceProject.org](http://www.InnocenceProject.org)), which is responsible for freeing nearly 150 wrongly convicted individuals based on DNA evidence, has been the driving force behind this movement. "Today, nobody wants to get rid of DNA evidence," says Latta. This movement has prompted state legislatures to increase the statute of limitations in all types of cases.

The Illinois state legislature has passed laws requiring law enforcement to store homicide evidence forever and sexual assault evidence for 25 years. In the past, if the courts convicted an individual of manslaughter after he killed someone in a bar fight, law enforcement agencies retained the evidence until the person completed his sentence.

Large evidence coming in also places additional strain on overtaxed property rooms. In areas, such as Clark County, Nevada, where the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department (LVMPD) is located, thieves have increased the scale of their thievery from petty jewel heists in

home burglaries to theft of equipment and supplies from construction sites.

"Crooks are stealing garage doors instead of wristwatches and major appliances instead of TVs," says Ed Gaertner, LVMPD director of evidence. "The impounded evidence no longer fits in a bag or an envelope, it goes on a pallet."

### Expiration dates

As in the grocery business, property rooms must keep a trained eye on expiration dates, or the statute of limitations, in a particular case. This information helps determine the length of time to maintain a piece of evidence. But it's a date many departments fail to check on a regular basis, says Latta. Take misdemeanor cases, which comprise nearly 70 percent of the items housed in today's property rooms. This evidence often becomes backlogged in the property room, but Latta says by paying attention to the statute of limitations for misdemeanors, which ranges from one to two years in most states, evidence may be cleared out more quickly.

To illustrate the importance of monitoring misdemeanor evidence, Latta offers the following example.

If someone spray paints graffiti on the side of a building and leaves a spray paint can behind, the investigating officer seizes the paint can as evidence and its final resting place is the property room — unless the department pays attention to the statute of limitations. "If that spray paint can sits on a shelf for a year and there are no suspects in mind, yet we never ask the arresting officer or detective what to do with the evidence, it will sit on the shelf — taking up space — forever," Latta emphasizes. "If you don't ask the question 'What do you want to do with it?' and have good disposal procedures in place, evidence remains forever in the property room." Detectives further compound the issue by retaining evidence beyond its "expira-

continued as **Perishables** on page 16

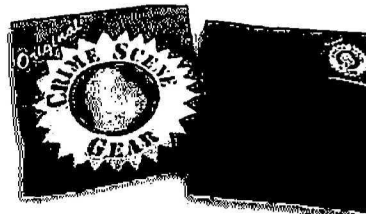
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**Perishables . . .** from page 14

tion date” out of fear for what will happen if they do not.

Perhaps they’ll be able to link that evidence to another crime in the future or possibly they’re afraid that if they dispose of it, the suspect will file a claim against the department when he’s released from prison. “But the bottom line,” says Latta, “is that it costs a department more to house this evidence than it does to pay the claim.” While the statute of limitations plays an important role, however, Gaertner cautions against being too hasty in the removal of evidence.

“Statute of limitations doesn’t always dictate the longevity of a piece of evidence,” he stresses. “We often make jokes about the fact that we can’t rotate our stock because the first item in, isn’t the next item out.”

The shelf life of an item has a lot of variables dictating the length of time we need to hold it. “Currently, the LVMPD houses more than 600,000 pieces of evidence in its 35,000-square-foot property room. While an easy solution to the department’s storage problems might be purging evidence after the statute of limitations expires, Gaertner says the process is far more complicated.

*Actual examples of some bad property room systems. A properly organized property room simplifies purging and disposition of evidence.*



The department holds evidence from homicide cases until all suspects have either served their time or died — there is no statute of limitations on a homicide case. And though felonies possess a seven-year statute of limitations and misdemeanors carry a two-year deadline, Gaertner says even evidence from such cases must be weighed carefully before disposal.

“What comes in as a misdemeanor case, may in fact be the suspect’s third or fourth offense, kicking it up to a felony charge,” Gaertner explains. “We cannot make the assumption that since the arresting officer labeled the case a misdemeanor, it will continue to be a misdemeanor as it’s processed through the courts. A third DUI is a felony, whereas a first or second are misdemeanors.”

**Rotating stock**

Grocery stores require employees to check expiration dates and rotate stock during each shift to ensure dated items sell before their shelf life expires. Such a review process is also critical to the property room.

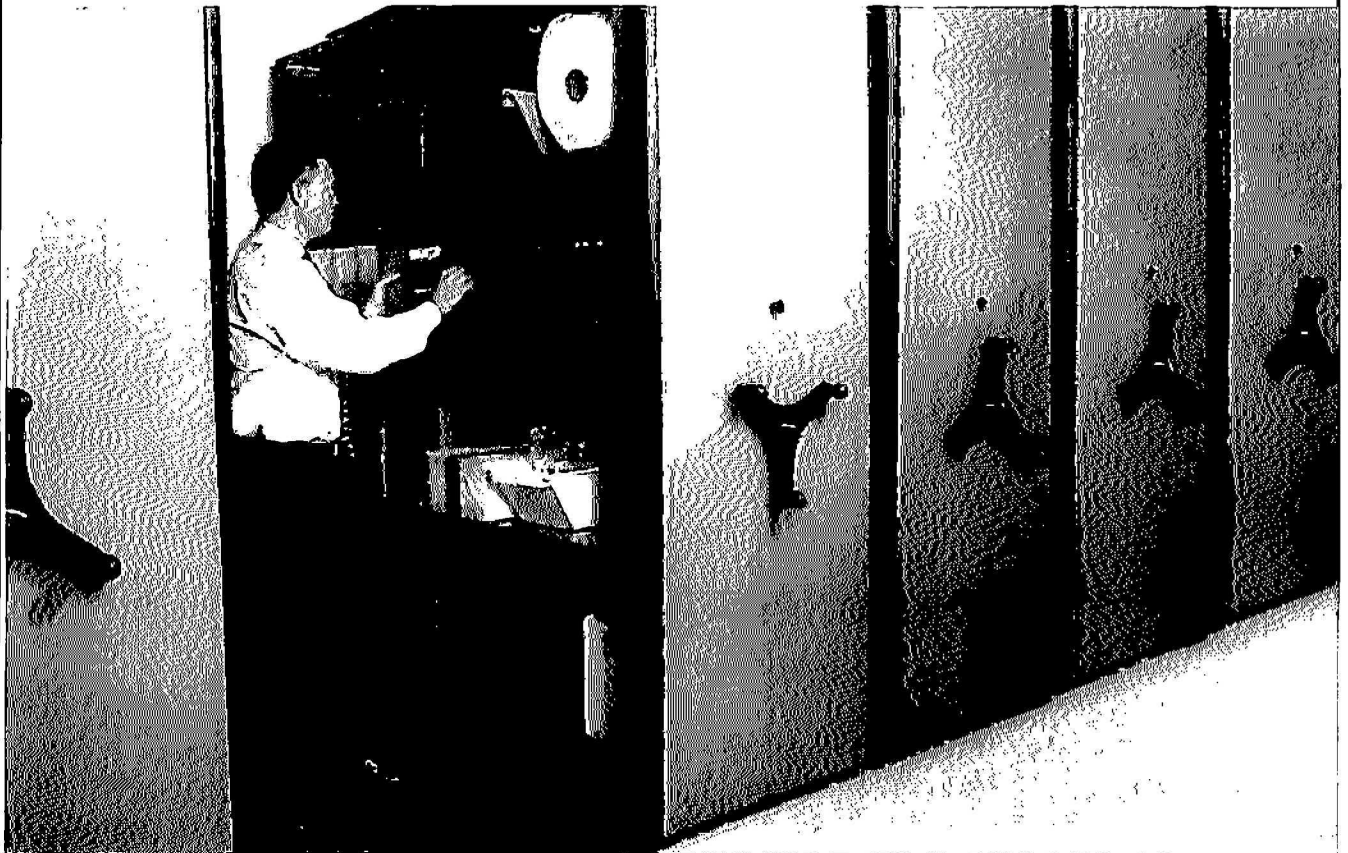
Take the head of a department involved in a recent IAPE property room audit who believed

continued as **Perishables** on page 19





GATHERING EVIDENCE SHOULDN'T BE HARDER  
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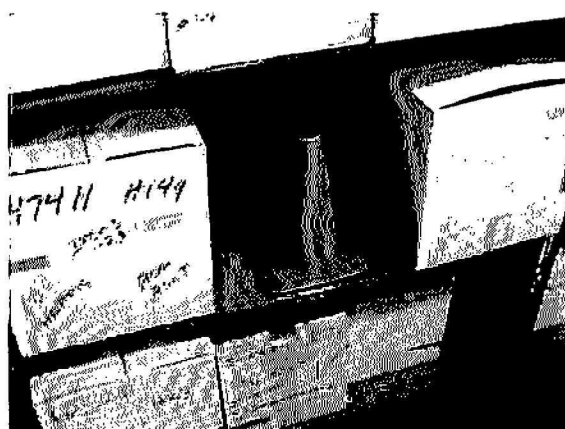
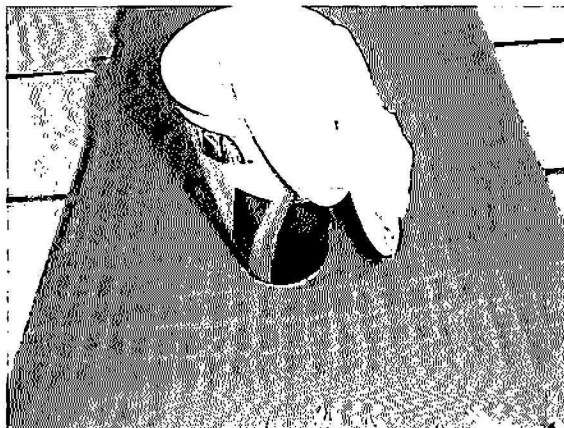
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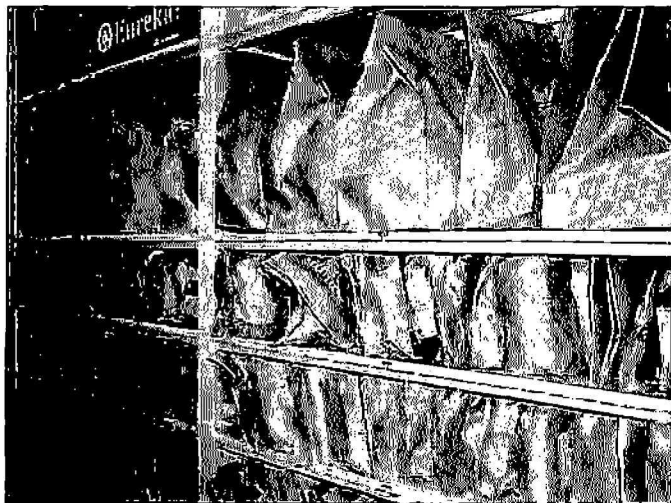
Test your Property Officer Skills.... Tell us what it is, email your answers to [jlatta@iape.org](mailto:jlatta@iape.org) and will recognize you in the next Evidence Log for Really Know-in Your Stuff!

**Perishables** . . . from page 16

his agency needed more evidence storage. The IAPE audit found otherwise. Out of 50,000 items in this department's evidence vault, 80 percent or 40,000 items were from misdemeanor cases, and nearly 80 percent of that 40,000 were beyond the statute of limitations.

"Approximately 32,000 of the 50,000 evidentiary items could in fact have been reviewed, and possibly released, destroyed or removed," says Latta. "This department didn't require a new property room. It needed a better system of reviewing, purging and disposing of evidence." "The IAPE recommends setting criteria to guide the length of time property should be stored before being reviewed. The organization suggests an evaluation schedule in "Property Room Standards," found on its Web site at [www.iape.org](http://www.iape.org), where felonies are reviewed after a year, misdemeanors after six months, and found property and safekeeping after 90 days, with secondary reviews following a similar schedule. However, the review period may vary based on state statutes, thus before setting such a policy, Latta recommends examining state guidelines.

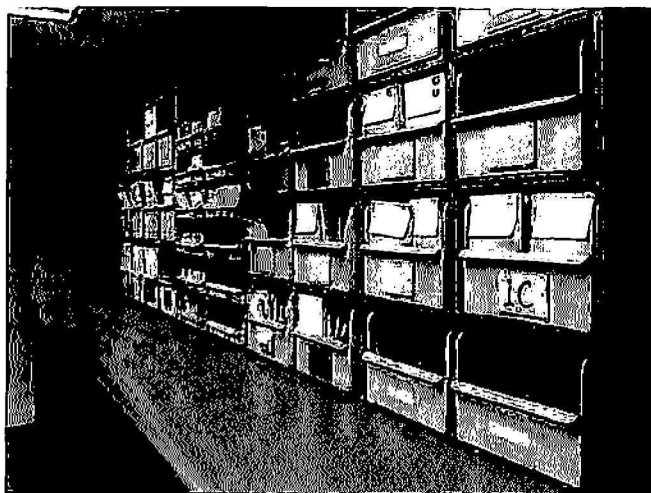
The LVMPD staffs seven clerical workers to scale the purging and disposal mountain. These individuals send disposition letters daily, requesting feedback on whether the evidence vault should



continue to hold the property, return it to its owner or dispose of it. Then these workers carefully track the disposition process to ensure detectives return disposition orders in a timely fashion.

Not all agencies have the funds for this, however. As vice president of the Property and Evidence Association of Florida, found on the Web at [www.peaf.org](http://www.peaf.org), Ann Gardella says the main problem sabotaging disposition of evidence is

continued as **Perishables** on page 20



*In a well organized property room, everything has a place, and everything is in its place.*



**Perishables . . .** from page 19

having the staff to do it. "It's a lengthy and time-consuming process, and there's just not enough staff to do it," she says.

Barcoding and other forms of automation have long streamlined inventory management in grocery stores. Today, many under-staffed property rooms are finding similar value in such force-multiplying technology.

"The more automation you have, the better," says Gardella, acting general manager of the Hillsboro County (Florida) Sheriff's Office Property Control Section. "We have about 91,000 cases right now, and that's 91,000 pieces of paper we're supposed to send out every six months. Without automation this task would be too time consuming. "Software allows this agency to electronically send disposition letters to deputies. Once the deputy decides what to do with a given piece of evidence, the letter automatically goes to his or her supervisor for approval.

"The process is performed entirely by computer, and each electronic file is permanently attached to the case record," Gardella says.

The LVMPD's evidence software system barcodes each item and assigns it a 10-digit event number, representing the year, month and day it was impounded. The charge, be it a felony, misdemeanor, gross misdemeanor, or property labeled as found and safekeeping, determines the initial review date, at which time the software electronically forwards disposition letters to the appropriate individuals.

This software simplifies tracking reviews and detective directives through various commands. If an officer recommends holding an item for six months, a clerk directs the software to assign it a Time Delay (TD) status of TD06, indicating the item may be disposed of after that time has passed. Time Release

(TR) status refers to the span of time that must elapse before returning an item to its rightful owner, while Time Hold (TH) status represents situations where the officer notes he's still investigating the case. If the officer asks to be contacted again within a year, the clerk assigns TH12 to the item, tagging the evidence for another disposition letter within 12 months.

**Storekeepers**

Grocery stores assign specific people to determine the fate of various types of products. The butcher pulls dated meat from the counter, the produce manager removes old produce, the dairy case supervisor disposes of outdated dairy products, and stockers withdraw dated canned goods. Property rooms also must assign specific individuals this task.

Who makes such calls can be a mixed bag. Typically, the detective or arresting officer decides the evidence's fate, in some areas the prosecutor and or court system must be involved in the decision, and in other departments the property room manager holds this responsibility.

When property room managers decide, Latta warns against them making these decisions in a vacuum.

"If we allow the property officer to do all the research and decision making, we could have a real problem," he explains. "The investigator may believe that evidence is linked to another crime. "Consider the repercussions of a situation where the property officer destroys a gun after the court adjudicates the case and an investigating officer later asks to see the weapon because he believes it may be tied to a homicide.

**"Disposal is one of the Number 1 things that can get you in trouble if you don't do it properly."**

*Ann Gardella  
Property Control Section, Hillsboro  
Co. (FL) Sheriff's Office*

continued as **Perishables** on page 21

**Perishables . . .** from page 20

“Leaving it up to the property officer is fine if you have adequate staffing for them to do the research and then contact the detective with their findings,” Latta says. “But in most cases, there are just not enough hours in the day. “The fact is, researching the details behind a case consumes considerable time — time under-staffed property rooms may lack the manpower for.

Each case must be reviewed on its own merits and questions such as “What is the current address of the property owner?” “What was the final disposition of the case?” or “How much time must pass before we can dispose of the property?” must be answered.

Realizing both detectives and property room supervisors lack sufficient time to research each piece of evidence themselves, the LVMPD employs investigative specialists — a civilian position — to aid divisions, such as narcotics investigation or crimes against persons, with this task. These specialists research each case and make recommendations to detectives about the evidence. Detectives then sign the disposition order and have their supervisors approve it, before directives return to the property room.

**Low on the food chain**

“The property room ends up low on the food chain,” says Latta. “Nobody cares about it until they have a problem.” This attitude is one of the largest roadblocks to purging and disposition compliance. “A review and purging system will not and cannot work unless there is a mandate from the top of the organization that it’s going to happen,” Latta stresses.

Without such a system, everyone from detectives to property room managers will say

they’re too busy to carry out the task. “It almost has to be force fed,” he says. Latta holds up a Georgia department’s policy as an exemplary solution to ensure compliance. This department forwards monthly reviews that offer detectives a choice to either retain or dispose of the evidence.

If a detective checks retain, he must answer the following questions: “Are there any known suspects?” and “Are there any workable leads?” If the detective replies no to both questions, he must write a justification for retaining the evidence and obtain supervisor approval.

“Some detectives will simply check retain because it’s too much work for them to look it up,” Latta says. “But when

they check retain and must answer why, and have their supervisor sign off on it, it really changes the equation. “Gardella agrees, saying such a system reduces what she dubs “pencil whipping” — the unnecessary retention of evidence to avoid disposal decisions. When a Hillsboro detective appears to be “pencil whipping” disposition letters, Gardella simply sends the notifications to his supervisor with a note asking whether he or she felt the deputy meant to retain this evidence after the statute of limitations had expired. “The supervisor usually returns the letters and tells the deputy to do it right,” she says.

**Preventing spoilage**

Expired items in a retail store either return to the manufacturer or go out in the trash. Property rooms must make similar decisions about items at the end of their shelf life.

A decision to dispose isn’t the final determination to be made, the next step is determining how the item will be disposed of. In most cases, personal property is given back to the rightful owner, drug paraphernalia and weapons are destroyed and

**“The property room ends up low on the food chain. Nobody cares about it until they have a problem.”**

*Joe Latta,  
Evidence Control Systems*

continued as **Perishables** on page 23

# Evidence Manager

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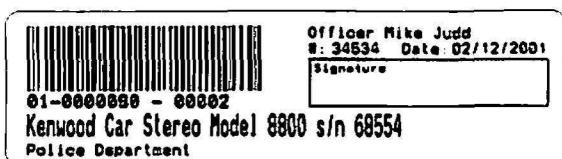


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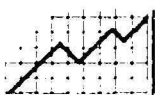
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**Perishables . . .** from page 21

narcotics are incinerated. "If it's saleable, we send it to auction," Gaertner says of the LVMP's policy.

"But if it's not appropriate for resale, we will put it in a secure Dumpster. If it is sensitive material, such as biological evidence, we have an outside company dispose of it. If it is weapons or drug paraphernalia, we will crush it, and if it's controlled substances, we incinerate them." While Latta says 90 percent of what comes in isn't worth reselling, valuable items can be sold through online auction services, such as [www.propertyroom.com](http://www.propertyroom.com).

"Everyone used to hold their own auction once or twice a year," Latta says. "Now departments call an auction house, which picks up items on an as-needed basis, photographs them and posts them on the Internet for sale." Departments benefit because they no longer house items until auction — items are disposed of as needed.

Relying on outside resources to perform such tasks can be a headache at times, Gaertner admits. These organizations, be it online auction houses, incinerator services or metal crushing facilities, have their own agendas and often their concern for liability and law enforcement's need for security are at odds. For instance, if an agency uses an auto-dismantler to crush firearms, law enforcement officials may not want disposal to occur during regular business hours to keep the destruction as close to the vest as possible. The vendor, on the other hand, does not want to shut down and exclude paying customers in his effort to provide a needed community service. "We walk a fine line," he says, "We have our SWAT and quality assurance teams with us during destruction to ensure proper scrutiny of the process."

**Satisfied customers**

Most agencies endeavor to return valuables to the owner. But sometimes this is impos-

sible. If police arrest a man for residential burglary and he possesses a box of valuable jewelry, this jewelry may be from another city, county or state, and authorities may never link it to a specific owner, Latta points out.

Owner notifications vary from property room to property room, but Latta recommends allotting no more than 30 days for owners to reclaim their property. "The shorter the period the better," he says. "Thirty days notice is as long a notice as I would ever want. But be sure the letter includes a statement noting that if they fail to pick up the item by a specific date it will be auctioned or destroyed in accordance with department policy."

Often state statutes guide this process. "Disposal is one of the No. 1 things that can get you in trouble if you don't do it properly," says Gardella. "There are many things that must be looked at, beginning with state statutes and laws." Hillsboro County shelves abandoned property for 90 days, then disposes of it appropriately. If it's junk, it's thrown away; but if it has some value, the deputy is asked whether there's an owner to return it to. If not, the item may be sold at auction. Other property is held until final case disposition, at which time the deputy must furnish a disposition order for the property. The agency then holds the item an additional 60 days past final disposition in accordance with Florida statute.

At the LVMPD, once a detective approves an item's release, the software system generates the first of two letters to send to the owner. If the owner doesn't respond within six weeks, a second letter mails. If this return-receipt letter comes back as undeliverable, Nevada statute permits the agency to dispose of the property. If the owner receives the letter but doesn't pick the item up within six months, state statute allows its disposal.

continued as **Perishables** on page 27



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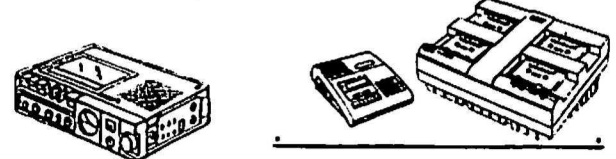



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**Perishables . . .** from page 23

### Good corporate citizens

Grocery stores provide a needed service, but many owners go beyond this in the name of civic duty. Many sponsor youth sports teams or other community events to show their support. Agencies can do the same through property disposal.

Improper disposal methods negatively impact a community, according to Gardella. "You can't just take TV sets and throw them into the garbage; the mercury inside requires them to be properly destroyed," she explains. Throwing usable items out also causes a detrimental effect.

"We make a lot of donations to the community. Clothing goes to the Salvation Army, bikes to local schools, and money raised in auction to the Board of County Commissioners where it's filtered back into the school system," she says. "Some items may also be used by the sheriff's department,

under state statute. You'd be hurting the community if you didn't distribute some of this stuff to them."

### Never-ending supply

If nothing ever left a grocery store's shelves, the shelves would soon overflow with outdated and spoiled items. The same fact rings true in the property room.

Hillsboro Sheriff's Office currently takes in approximately 4,000 pieces a month. With 240,000 pieces of evidence stored in two warehouses, it becomes critical that the agency regularly review, purge and dispose of items.

"You have to make sure you continue to maintain a reasonable ratio of items in to items out, or you'll simply fill up the building," Gaertner emphasizes. "It's just the way it is. There will not be a stop to new items. And, it's the only way to ensure perishables are continually pulled from the property room store." ♦

# Lee Co. (FL): Search for an Evidence Tracking System

By Sanna Barry, Vuetura, Inc., 875 124th Ave. NE, Suite 201, Bellevue, WA 98005 (425)453-4711 • www.vuetura.com,

assisted by the Lee County (FL) Sheriff's Department.

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Problems with organizing, maintaining, and tracking evidence are widespread and difficult for any single inventory system to handle. In addition to the vast amount of items that can be considered evidence, labeling and storing is often incomplete and inefficient, evidence disposal is difficult, and connectivity with other departments is lacking.

As Major Connie Cooper, Miami Dade County stated, **“One of the greatest routine stresses of law enforcement activities is evidence management. Lost or missing evidence can completely disrupt the core of any agency including the potential loss of careers or criminal prosecution from mismanagement or lax procedures.”** The Lee County Sheriff's Department in Fort Myers, Florida acknowledged the limitations of their evidence system and began researching different providers.

## Traditional Method

Lee County was utilizing a 15-year old minicomputer program written in a proprietary database language. The shortcomings of the system included low storage capacity, inefficiency, crude reporting, and reliance on phone calls and emails. The staff became overworked as a result of these deficiencies.

## Research

As Lee County began their research on an updated system, a number of concerns arose. First, existing -packaged software packages included useful features but lacked the capability to be customized. Dramatic changes in workflow would result through the implementation of a new program. Second, it was imperative that information housed in the current system would not be lost upon transfer. It became clear that a pre-packaged tracking program would not be the correct solution. Lee County decided to enlist the aid of an outside company to build a custom-designed evidence tracking program.

## Criteria

Lee County determined the necessary criteria for the company they recruited. These included: experience in custom software development, expertise in receiving processes, warehousing, inventory, data migration, and systems integration. The Department made the decision to work with Vuetura, Inc, a company located in Bellevue, WA. With two already-developed programs, including a detailed package receiving and a comprehensive visitor management system, Vuetura had a strong background in custom software-design and logistics.

continued as Tracking page 33

**One  
of the greatest routine stresses  
of law enforcement activities is evidence management.  
Lost or missing evidence can completely disrupt the core of any agency,  
including the potential loss of careers or criminal prosecution from  
mismanagement or from lax procedures.**

By Major Connie Cooper  
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Property Room Information Management System

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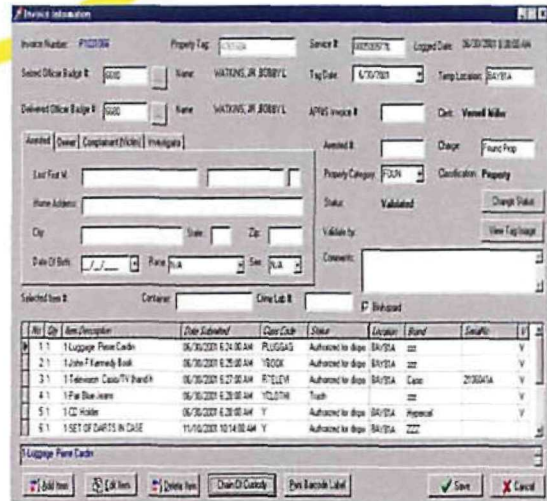
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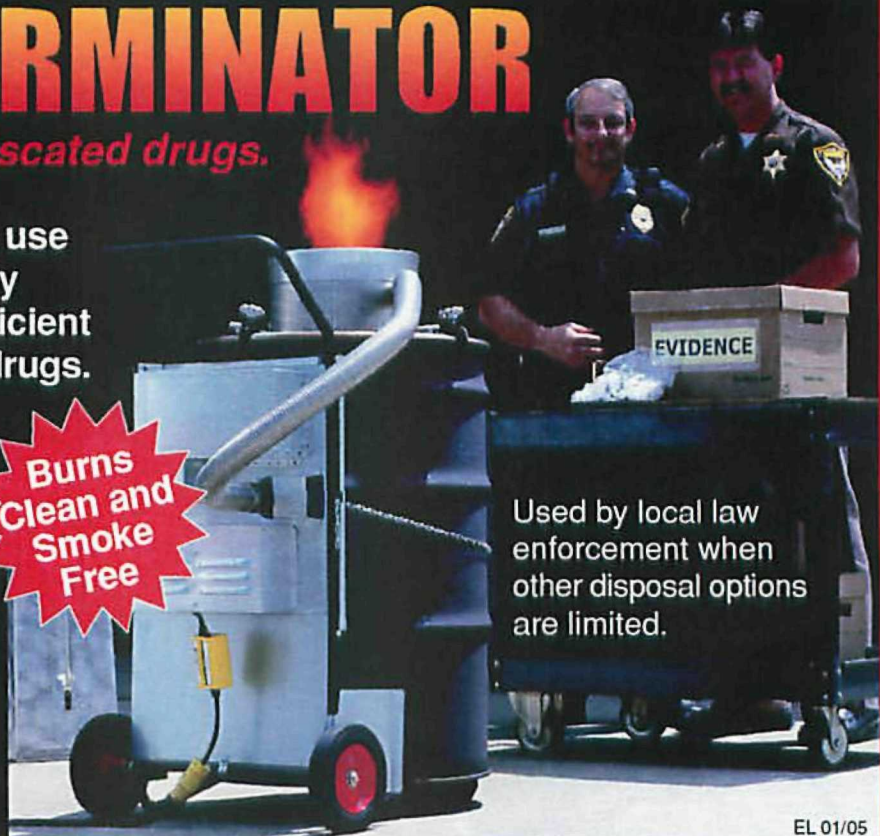
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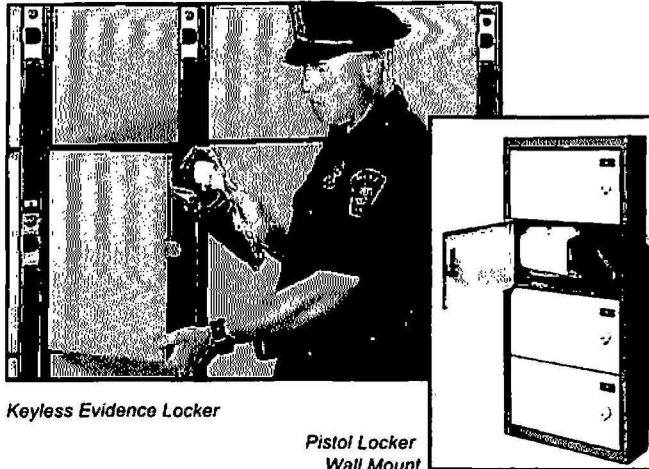


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## Tracking... from page 28

### Development

To develop the program, Vuetura representatives observed the Lee County Evidence Room workflow and procedures. Interview, analysis, and development were completed with a close partnership between the two parties.

The new system hardware included a client/server system, two workstations equipped with barcode scanners, thermal label printers, and handheld computers.

In addition to the hardware, legacy records from the old system were converted into the new system and appropriate departments and agencies were allowed access to the information through a web interface. The software was written in Visual Basic.Net with a SQL backend and ASP.Net was used for web access.

After implementation, a one day training was sufficient to utilize the user-friendly interface.

### Conclusion

Automating with Vuetura's Vuetura Trac Evidence™ allowed the Lee County Sheriff's Department to provide 100% accountability of all property and evidence from the collection point to disposal. The extensive system functions prevented loss and unauthorized release of evidence or property and created detailed documentation, quick access, information sharing, item visibility, and data mining.

As Captain Richard Younger, Lee County Sheriff's Office stated about Vuetura Trac, "...there will be significant improvements in data entry, reliability, speed, efficiency, reporting, and information access, and property purging now will be documented." ♦



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    - b. A total of 2080 hours (one year equivalent) as a part time assignment
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Business Telephone: ( ) -

E-mail Address:

Applicant's I.A.P.E. Basic Property & Evidence Course: Month: Year:

Location where you attended the course:

Current Dues Paying I.A.P.E. Member: Yes No
(If not a current member, call 1-800-449-4273 to apply/reapply)

Certification of Property Officer Experience:

Certification of Service as a Property Officer

As the Chief of Police, or the designee of the Chief, I certify that the above applicant has served as a Property Officer for this Department as:

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Part time Property Officer who has completed at least 2080 hours (the equivalent of one full year) in the Property Officer function

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# 10 Reasons Why to Use Bar Code Technology

## Start Your "Count-down" to Efficiency!

By Shannon Turner

In my career as an evidence technician, I have spoken to countless evidence room managers who ask the same questions: "Why should I switch from my logbooks or my 'works just fine' database to a barcode evidence management system?"

There is always that overwhelmed evidence room clerk who says, "It would just be too big of a project to switch over to bar-coding." Then there's that old school excuse of, "We've done it that way for 40 years and it works just fine."

The list of reasons goes on and on: there's no money, we're a small agency; we don't have time. But the bottom line question from almost everyone is, "What are the advantages of switching to bar-coding for our property and evidence room management?"

In response to this debate over bar-coding vs. not bar-coding, we will discuss in this article the top 10 reasons an evidence room should be managed by an efficient evidence management system with barcode capabilities.

When I started working as a police evidence technician in 1994, our department kept old-fashioned logbooks to manage the evidence in our property room. Everything was logged in by hand and our monthly statistics were tallied from tick marks made on my desk calendar. Doing a search consisted of running my finger down page after page of evidence entries to find the one item I was looking for.

We then started using a records management system with an attached property module. Although it was better than the logbooks, it was still laborious and repetitive to enter information. Entering items took 2-3 minutes each and we had to consult codebooks to make sure everything was

entered in properly. Statistics and reports were limited and the module didn't allow for any type of customization. The system was not designed with the full functionality needed for evidence management. As a result, the information entered into the system wasn't necessarily the information we needed. The only way to search for anything was by case number, which often took many phone calls or lengthy research to find.

The chain of custody was now maintained in the database rather than across the columns of the logbook, but the information had to be manually entered. For example, if 40 items were destroyed, then I had to manually enter the same date, time, and destruction code 40 different times. The property module of the RMS system did not have any way of calendaring items for destruction. I had to do that with 3x5 cards or by writing it on my calendar.

Finally in 2001, my chief informed me that he wanted to implement an evidence system with barcode functionality. After lengthy research, demonstrations of systems, and talking to users, I found an evidence management system that I felt would provide all the features I needed to efficiently manage our evidence room.

### Why Bar-coding?

#### 1. Bar-coding reduces repetitive work.

Prior to the implementation of the barcode system, the officers hand-wrote a property tag for every item, tediously writing the same thing over and over. Then the evidence technician would have to repeat that effort by

continued as **Bar Code** on page 38



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**Bar Code . . .** from page 36

entering the same information into the system over and over. I once spent 2 days entering evidence from a homicide case into the system. The only benefit to that was I had the case number memorized after entering it 137 times!

I averaged 3-4 hours each day entering new evidence into our RMS system. After the implementation of the barcode system, I spent 30 minutes at the most. Because the officers now entered the information directly into the evidence database, the only thing I had to do was scan the barcode that was affixed to the evidence. The information was quickly retrieved from the database. I just did a quick quality control check and changed the location of the item to its storage area.

Our barcode system had a unique feature that saved valuable time. When entering new items into the database, the system had the ability to carry over repetitive information. For example, after the officer entered in the first item in the case, the consistent information such as case number, officer, date of offense, and so on was carried over to the next item. The only thing that had to be entered was the variable information such as item description. The homicide case that used to take me two days to enter now took me about an hour with this carry-over feature.

**2. The evidence screen was customized to meet our departments' needs**

When choosing an evidence management system, I found it imperative that the screen be configurable to the user's specification. No two evidence rooms are managed in the same way, therefore making it unreasonable to expect them to all conform to the same pre-designed evidence management system. Our system allowed us to design the screen to mimic our workflow. The fields were named, organized, and formatted to specifically meet the individual needs of our department.

The system was so versatile, in fact, that after using it for several months we deleted a field not being used and added two new ones.

**3. Running reports and searches is efficient and unlimited**

An efficient barcode evidence management system should allow for each field to be searchable. After the implementation of our system, I could search the system by any field or combination of fields. This allowed me to quickly retrieve answers to questions with the information I had at hand.

Running reports became fast and easy with the custom queries feature. I could easily set up and saved my routine reports. I had 8 different areas that my Chief required me to submit stats on each month. Running all 8 reports took a little under 2 minutes to complete. The unlimited reporting feature came in especially handy during our annual visit from the State Auditor, an event that lasted an average of 3-5 days. Every audit concluded with a list of unanswered questions that I would have to research and submit to them. After installing our barcode system, audits were extremely easy. The auditor walked into the evidence room at 8:00 a.m. and walked out at noon. We passed with flying colors. I could answer every question she had by running a simple report while she watched. She even commented on what an awesome system we had! She said that she appreciated the computer generated barcode rather than the pre-numbered barcode labels that some systems use.

**4. Having a barcode system can make your evidence room virtually paperless**

A simple barcode on a piece of evidence took the place of property tags and evidence sheets. We no longer had to search files of property sheets to have someone sign out evidence. We simply scanned the barcode on the evidence, and then scanned the location to where it was going. It was done in the amount of time it took to pull the

continued as **Bar Code** on page 40



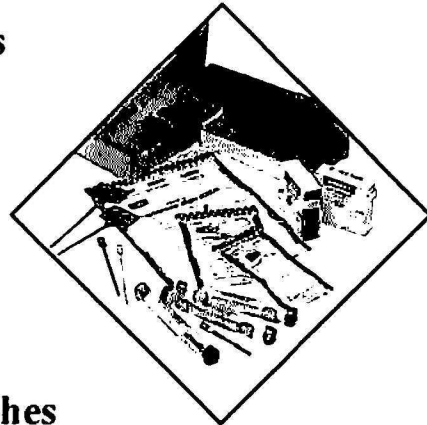
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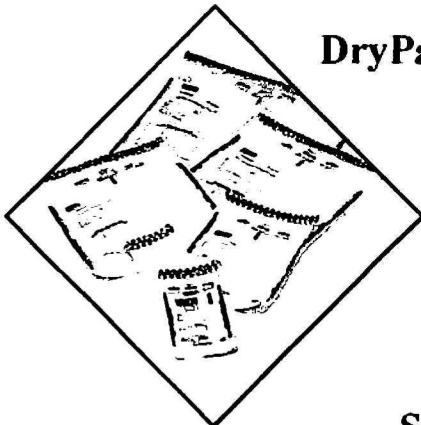
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**Bar Code . . .** from page 38

trigger of the scanner. If a signature was required, the person would sign the LCD signature capture pad and their signature was electronically captured and stored in the evidence system. It even automatically generated a receipt for the person. After becoming paperless, I was amazed how much time I saved not having to shuffle paper to and from departments. The clerks in our records department really liked the fact that it cut down on their filing.

**5. Barcodes allow you to complete high-volume projects quickly and easily**

Every evidence technician's nightmare is to purge (or release or transfer) hundreds of items at the same time. The time it takes to document the destruction of those items is staggering. An efficient barcode system will allow you to transfer the status of large batches of items at once.

A practical example is a recent drug burn I completed. I queried my system for everything located in "Narcotics Awaiting Destruction". It returned 603 items. I chose the information I wanted included, then printed out a report of those items titled Narcotics Approved For Destruction. I took it to my Captain for his signature authorizing destruction. The most time-consuming part was driving to the incinerator facility to have the drugs destroyed.

I then prompted the system to transfer those 603 items to "destroyed" status... and it changed the status of those 603 items all at once. I was able to accomplish this entire project (except for the actual destruction) in less than 10 minutes.

With my prior RMS system, it would have taken at least a week to key the destruction of 603 items and I would have had to spend several hours preparing the destruction report by hand. I used

continued as **Bar Code** on page 44

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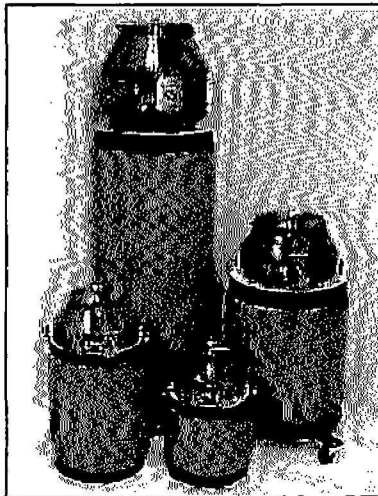
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**Author: Lt. Joseph Latta (Ret)**

**Bar Code . . .** from page 40

the same type of procedure for auctions. The most recent auction brought in over \$14,000 and I spent no more than 20 minutes preparing the auction report and transferring the status of the items in the evidence system.

**6. A barcode system will save valuable time in day-to-day evidence room duties**

In our previous RMS system, each time evidence changed status I would have to key in the case number, find the item in the list, choose to modify it, key in the time, date, officer, and action code, then save it. If there were 10 items, then that process was repeated 10 times.

With a barcode system, it literally takes the time to pull the trigger of a barcode scanner to perform the same transaction.. You don't even have to touch the keyboard. Our system had a special enhanced wand-processing feature that allowed me to scan the location first... then scan all the items that are to be checked out to that location. This feature literally saved me hours each day.

**7. An unalterable chain of custody will provide integrity in court**

Many evidence management systems require the user to manually enter the date and time when making a change in chain of custody. A keen defense attorney will challenge the validity of the documented chain of custody if that fact is brought to light in court. An efficient evidence management system will automatically assign the date and time to the chain of custody. An unalterable chain of custody brings credibility to the courtroom. I have never had the chain of custody challenged in court since before the implementation of our barcode system.

Our system also kept a record of any changes that were made in the system. It would show the old value, the new value, the date it was changed, and the identity of the person who

changed it. In the previous RMS system we used, a change could be made without their being any record of the change.

**8. A retention feature allows for systematic purging of evidence**

If you ask an evidence room manager what their biggest challenge is, they will most likely say it is knowing when to purge or release evidence. An efficient barcode system will include a retention feature that will monitor the life cycle of evidence, thus enabling timely release and/or destruction. Based on retention codes set up to meet our individual department's policies, our system calculated the retention time for each piece of evidence.

By running a simple retention report, this feature allowed us to purge or release evidence in a timely manner. This eliminated space issues, generated revenue to our department, and returned evidence to its legal owner in a timely manner. I used the retention feature to monitor our department's civil forfeiture funds. This enabled funds to be deposited into the forfeiture account as soon as possible.

**9. Barcode systems are an asset to major projects**

A major change such as moving to a new building or remodeling the evidence room can be overwhelming, time consuming, and costly. An efficient barcode evidence system can, however, make the project relatively painless. Most importantly, it will save time and money and protect the integrity of your evidence.

Our department was in the position of having to spend thousands of dollars to rent storage units to house our evidence inventory. We were full to capacity and in desperate need of reorganization, but the limitations of the RMS system made that project impossible. It was not a

continued as **Bar Code** on page 45

## Bar Codes . . . from page 44

realistic goal for one evidence technician to key in the location change of 12,000 items by hand. After implementing the barcode system, however, the reorganization project was completed in less than four months.

With the ability to transfer the status/location of hundreds (or even thousands) of items with one simple command, the system enabled us to relocate over 10,000 items and destroy over 2,000 items.

After the project was completed, we had cleared 50% of our storage space and created an additional 48 new storage locations by utilizing our storage space better.

### **10. A barcode system should be able to import information from your current database**

An essential capability of a barcode system should be the ability to import evidence records from your current database. This eliminates having to work from two different systems or re-enter the old system information into the new barcode system.

Our agency was able to import 34,000 records into the new barcode system from our RMS system in just a few hours. We then had the ability to manage those 34,000 records with the features of the new barcode system that were previously not available in the RMS system.

### **Conclusion**

No matter how small or large your agency, you too can benefit greatly by utilizing barcode technology to manage your property and evidence. Police agencies and crime labs across the country are seeing an immediate return on investment as they implement barcode systems in their evidence rooms. Today's law enforcement agencies are challenged by an increase in workload, a reduction

in force, and budget limitations. Barcode evidence management is the solution to save time and money, generate revenue, and increase the overall integrity and efficiency of law enforcement agencies.

Unique barcodes are assigned to each item of property as it is entered into the system. Each item is assigned to a specific location. Each location is identified by a location barcode. A location can be a box (which can be transferred to another location), or a shelf, a pallet, a locker, a safe, a room, an officer, a court, a lab, etc. Each time an item is moved to a new location the system creates an unalterable record or audit trail of that items movement. If a box is moved to a new location, all items in that box will automatically be recorded as moved to the new location of the box. By scanning a location barcode all items in that location are identified. An audit report immediately identifies the specific location of each and every item in the system and every location that the item has been in since it was first checked into the property room.

*Shannon Turner, CPES, began her career in the criminal justice system 23 years ago working in a criminal defense law firm. In 1984 she joined the Benton County Prosecuting Attorney's Office in Benton County, WA, specializing in child victim forensic interviewing. After 11 years, she became a police evidence technician, working for the Kennewick Police Department until 2001, then the Pasco Police Department until 2004. In addition to managing an evidence room for over a decade, she is also extensively trained in crime scene investigation, working over 140 crime scenes. Shannon is a sought after speaker and trainer regarding evidence management and crime scene investigation. She has written several articles published in law enforcement publications. She is currently the Property & Evidence Specialist for FileOnQ in Seattle, WA, manufacturers of the EvidenceOnQ evidence management system. She can be contacted at (206) 755-7215, or via E-mail at [Shannon@FileOnQ.com](mailto:Shannon@FileOnQ.com). ♦*

# I've Got Something You Don't Have!

Can You Do Us One Better?

It's been several issues since we have had space for some of the great entries that we regularly get for this column. We didn't want you think it had been abandoned, so here are a couple of the more recent ones. Send in your "claim to fame," and we'll have another column before too many issues go by.

Considering the traditional affinity between police officers and donuts or similarly delicious pastries, it's rare that a "bear claw" actually makes it to a Property Room. Sergeant Neal Mongan is from Huntington Park (CA) Police Department, a small city in the huge Los Angeles metropolis, so he was surprised to find out after returning from the Burbank IAPE Property Management Class recently that the "bear claws" in his property room had part of a real bear attached! The bear's foot was found in a plastic baggie in his city and turned over to one of their Animal Control Officers. (How long are you going to keep it, Neal?)

This item is only somewhat unusual in the beautiful wilds of our largest state, but even in that part of the country it is seldom seen in such quantities. Evidence Tech Susan Linn, from the Soldotna Police (AK) Department, recently returned from the Everett, WA, IAPE Property Management Class, and she reports having received 75 moose and caribou antlers all at once. The pile was too big for her property room, so they improvised by sealing off their sally-port for temporary storage.

This item is old, but scary. BE CAREFUL! The Worcester (MA) Telegram & Gazette reported on March 2, 2004, that "Police Keep Bomb 1 Night." A passer-by found the device and brought it to police headquarters, and the responding officer made a report. The officer thought nothing of the device, considering it "harmless," the Chief said. The bomb was left in the police evidence room until the officer responsible for checking that room noticed it and questioned if it should have been left there.

The Police Chief said the device a 6-inch-long copper tube with a wick protruding from it was considered harmless at first. "It didn't have any capability to do structural damage," the Chief said. Still, he called the state police bomb unit. They would not move the device and detonated it in police headquarters, under sandbags. The Chief asked residents who find such devices in the future to leave them where they are and call police.

If you, too, have an item in your Property Room that you think is worthy of this column, or if you have a unique storage solution, or have developed a storage technique that you think others may be able to take advantage of, then e-mail your story to The Evidence Log editorial staff at [editor@iape.org](mailto:editor@iape.org) ◆

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# Dialogue of Property Professionals

by Joe Latta and other members of the Property and Evidence profession

There are very few problems arising in Property Rooms that have not been addressed by other professionals in other Property Rooms. Here's the chance to take advantage of the collective expertise of about 3,000 property and evidence professionals. If your problem is here, it could save you time and energy in producing a solution. If it isn't here, then let us hear from you!

\*\*\*\*\*

**Dialogue** between Property Officer **Stanley Kruljac**, Little Elm (TX) Police Department, and IAPE Executive Director Joe Latta:

**Kruljac:** I would like to thank you for such an informative website. I attended the Property Management Class in Frisco in March. I am totally reorganizing our Property Room and am having to create a policy manual. Your website has been invaluable in my effort to complete this task. Thanks once again for your class, and in my opinion, a top-rated site for any officer to take advantage of.

**Latta:** Thanks for your letter, Stan, and we frequently get such comments about the site. If you or any other members have a need for something that isn't there, let us know and we will try to locate it for you. Conversely, when any of you have something great that you want to share, send it to me, or to editor@IAPE.org. Thanks, again!

\*\*\*\*\*

**Dialogue** between **Anonymous**, and IAPE Executive Director Joe Latta:

**Anonymous:** I learned today that one of our Majors and the Chief are attempting to give the Internal Affairs Supervisor access to the Property Room. I am opposed. At this point, only Property Room staff and the Property Room Supervisor have access. Am I being too restrictive?

**Latta:** Probably not, for a number of reasons. First and foremost, if something is stolen or turns up missing, he (or she) becomes one of the suspects, so who is going to do the investigation? Also, when they change assignments, it would become advisable

to do an inventory, just as when Property Room staff change. If you don't, then the former I.A. Supervisors would be on the suspect list as well. Regardless of who they are or how trustworthy they are, the more people that have access, the harder it is to have accountability for the integrity of the Property Room. Good luck!

\*\*\*\*\*

**Dialogue** between **Mark Ryan**, CPES, Maple Grove (MN) Police Department, and IAPE Executive Director Joe Latta:

**Ryan:** In our attempt to better our facility, we switched our locks over to Medeco brand locks. My question is regarding the "core" key, and the card needed to make new keys through the Medeco company. What is your recommendation for keeping these two items secure and out of the wrong persons' hands? I want to make sure that we set up the correct procedure for storing these items. Please let me know how we should proceed with this issue.

**Latta:** I recently saw a similar problem in another department, where they locked the key and card in a small vault that required a two-person rule to enter the vault for the items. If I recall correctly, the commanding officer of the Property Room and a Deputy could open the vault, but it required both of them at the same time to access the key and card. In your situation, perhaps it be kept in a lockbox in your limited access office, with a Major being the only one with access to the lockbox. Alternatively, use a lockbox in his or her office, with you having the only key.

\*\*\*\*\*

continued as **Dialogue** on page 49

**Dialogue . . .** from page 48

**Dialogue** between Evidence Technician **Jayme Rader**, Leavenworth County (KS) Sheriff's Department, and IAPE Executive Director Joe Latta:

**Rader:** I was wondering if you could help me. Our new Sheriff came to me and asked if I could check with other agencies to see if they have policies regarding making copies of videotapes and photographs for citizens, attorneys, media, etc. We currently make copies of videotapes and digital photograph CD's for attorneys and officer that are involved in the case, but we don't have anything in writing. I have gone through your website and I didn't see anything specifically regarding this issue. Are you aware of any sample policies regarding this growing issue?

Also, I went to your Property and Evidence Management class in December that was held in Kansas City (MO), and I wanted to thank you. I thought it was an excellent class, and now I am re-doing our Evidence Room. Thank you for your time.

**Latta:** I forwarded your e-mail to several contacts of mine to see if anyone had written policies regarding media distribution. I will forward any replies to you, and also refer them to The Evidence Log editor. If you find something, let me know. Otherwise, hopefully we will see this in the magazine and someone will contact one of us. Good luck!

\*\*\*\*\*

**Dialogue** between **Kim Gittleson**, Steamboat Springs (CO) Police Department, and IAPE Executive Director Joe Latta:

**Gittleson:** I am trying to find an answer as to how long I need to retain the property records after disposition of property. Our state archive has retention schedules for police records that list many different forms, but nothing about property records. I spoke with an official from that agency

and they did not know where property records fell in their retention schedule. Should I just follow the retention for incident reports, and if so, do I retain them for the proper amount of time from disposition or from date of report? Any suggestions on this matter would be greatly appreciated.

**Latta:** My preference is to link the retention for property records to that of the related incident reports. Clearing any retained property should be a requirement before any incident report is destroyed. Once the incident is destroyed, then the property report loses its value, and can be destroyed as well.

I knew of one agency that saved property reports 20 years, incident reports 15 years, photos 10 years, and fingerprint cards 5 years. One end result was that we had evidence with no justifying crime report with which to prosecute a suspect even if one was identified from the property. It didn't make any sense.

One could argue that you should keep the property report forever to provide a defense if there is a subsequent charge of mishandling any of the evidence, but if there is no report documentation to explain why the property was taken or what value it was, the point is lost on a permanent retention of the property or property record. ◆

\*\*\*\*\*

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Anonymous

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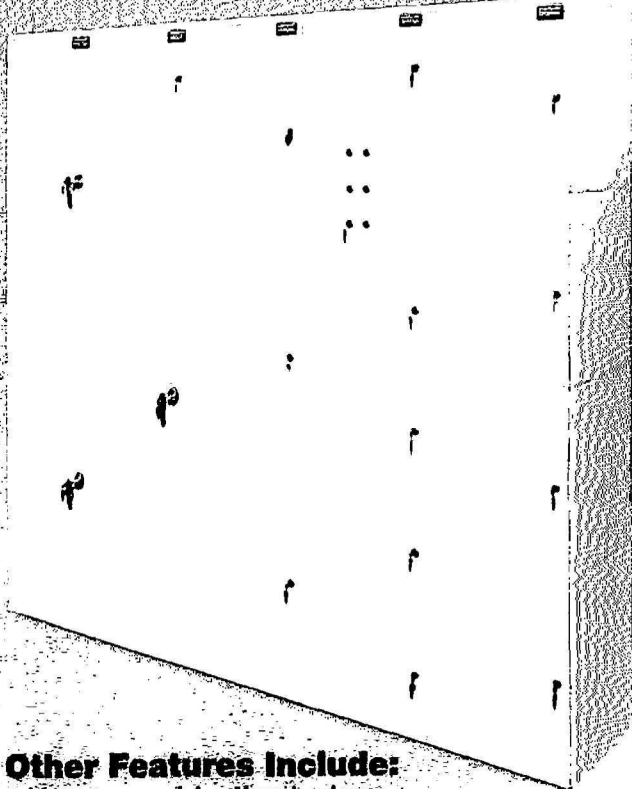
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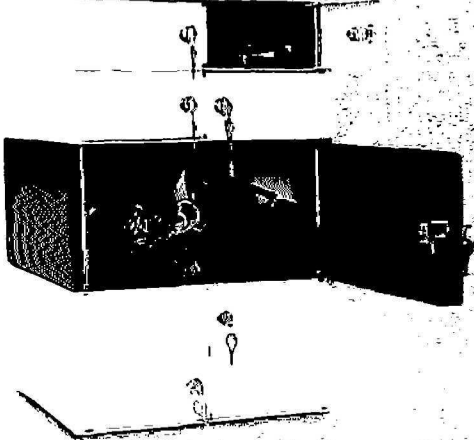
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**Headline Highlights**

These are excerpts from the articles cited that have particular meaning to those of us in the Property and Evidence field. Especially note the **bold type**.

**Palm Beach (FL) Post**  
June 28, 2005

By Staff Writer Stephanie Slater  
**Police custodian confesses to stealing \$60,000**

A Boynton Beach police department employee was arrested Monday after he confessed to stealing nearly \$60,000 from the department's evidence room. The 58 year-old evidence custodian started taking money two years ago. He hid the empty bags around the evidence room, police said. More than 100 cases might have been impacted as a result of the theft, the Police Chief said.

The evidence custodian, a former New Jersey police officer, was charged with grand theft and placed on administrative leave. The department plans a full audit to determine how much money was stolen, the Chief said.

\*\*\*\*\*

Copyright 2005 Sun-Sentinel Company  
**Sun-Sentinel (Fort Lauderdale, FL)**  
July 16, 2005

**Boynton, Police Chief Part Ways; Citing Morale Mismanagement, City Seeks Change**

After a nine-year term marked by low morale, public protests and a no-confidence vote, Boynton Beach decided to part ways Friday with police Chief M.G., City Manager K.B. announced in a written statement.

Assistant Chief M.I. will act as interim chief until the city hires a new police chief. That hire will not come until the city completes a management study of the department and an external audit of the department's evidence room, K.B. said.

"It was advantageous for the city and the police department to initiate a change," K.B. said in a telephone interview.

Some of the things that sparked M.G. demise were the recent fallout from a "vacation audit," in which the department found that several

officers took more vacation time than they were entitled to by not reporting the time, and the arrest of one of the agency's two evidence custodians for stealing at least \$60,000 from its evidence room. Critics and city officials have pointed to those two events as proof of M.G. mismanagement.

"The cumulative activities over the past several months really made me realize change was appropriate," K.B. said. The county's largest police union was a little more blunt.

Vice Mayor M.M had made no secret of his disapproval of the chief. He publicly scolded M.G. at Tuesday's commission meeting by reading a resident's letter calling the police chief a "disgrace" and suggesting that he resign. "It was long overdue for all the embarrassment that he's caused this city," McCray said Friday.

At Tuesday's meeting, former Mayor G.B. defended M.G., saying that, by asking for a management audit, the commissioners were allowing a thief to tarnish the reputation of the department and its management. G.B. repeated his defense Friday. "I think it's absurd that because of the actions of a thief to impugn the reputation of the chief," he said. "The comments that were made reflected poorly on the reputation of a very good police department and its management."

Commissioner Mike Ferguson, one of two commissioners who voted against the management audit, said Gage was a "very good chief." Ferguson said Gage was "betrayed by some of his own police officers" because he was "too by-the-book."

Gage was scheduled to retire in July 2006. He will receive a separation amount equal to a year's salary, about \$95,000, Bressner said.

continued as **Highlights** on page 59

## *Bits and Pieces*

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*Miamisburg, OH* November 2-3, 2005

*Brookline, MA* November 16-17, 2005

*Clarksburg, WV* Nov. 30 - Dec. 1, 2005

### **2006 Property & Evidence Classes**

*Burbank, CA* January 31-February 1, 2006

*Lawrence, GA* February 8-9, 2006

Sponsor: Gwinett County Police

*Portland, OR* March 1-2, 2006

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*Greenbelt, MD* March tba, 2006

*Tucson, AZ* April 11-12, 2006

*Philadelphia, PA* April 26-27, 2006

*Roanoke, VA* May 3-4, 2006

Sponsor: VA Dept. of Forensic Science

*Kalamazoo, MI* May 16-17, 2006

*Pigeon Forge, TN* June 1-2, 2006

*Kansas City, MO (Airport)* June 14-15, 2006

Sponsor: Overland Park Police Dept.

*Frisco, TX* August 23-24, 2006

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*Info on most classes on IAPE Website*

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## **Property Association Websites**

International Association for Property & Evidence

Go to [www.iape.org](http://www.iape.org)

Arizona Association for Property and Evidence

Go to [www.azape.org](http://www.azape.org)

California Association for Property & Evidence

Go to [www.cape-inc.org](http://www.cape-inc.org)

Colorado Association of Property & Evidence Technicians

Go to [www.capet.com](http://www.capet.com)

Property & Evidence Association of Florida

Go to [www.peaf.org](http://www.peaf.org)

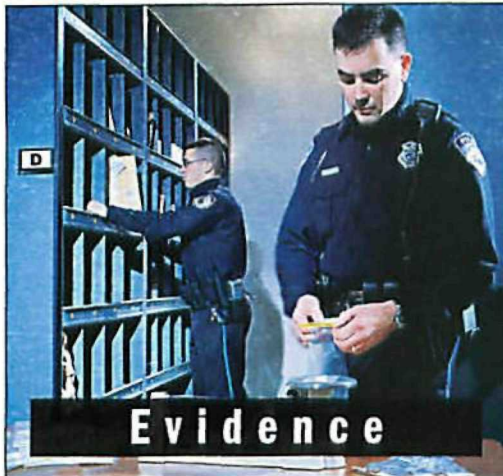
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Go to [www.opoa.info](http://www.opoa.info) (click "Training/Events" tab)

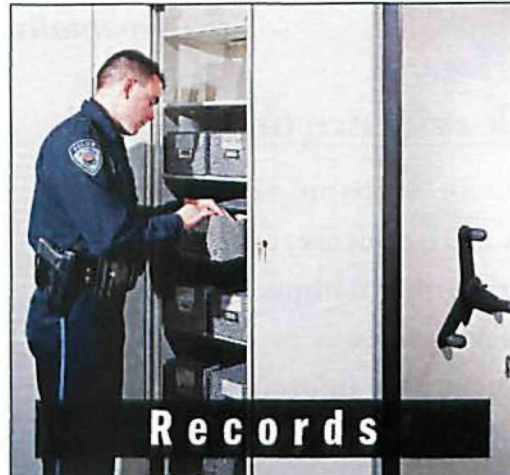
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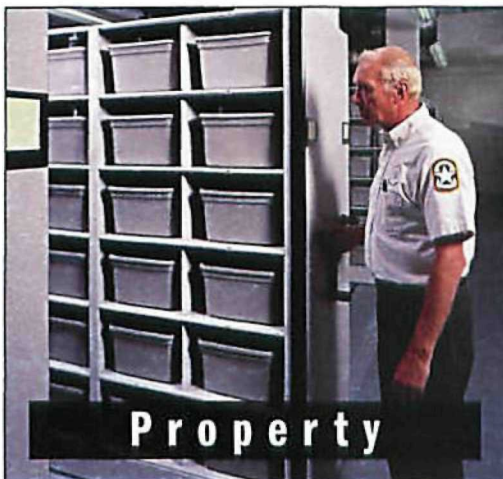
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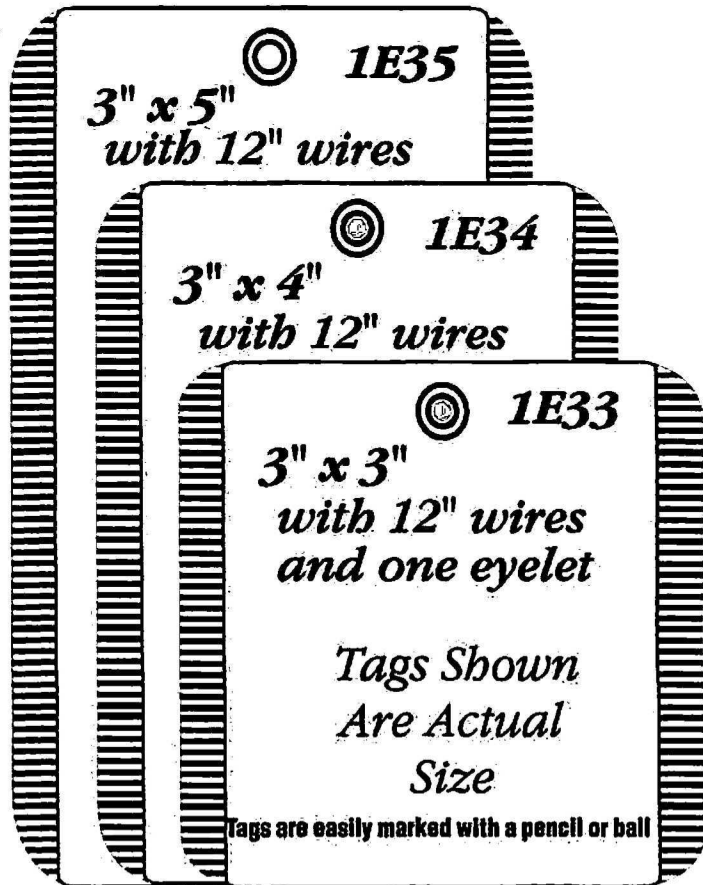
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# What a Difference a Class Makes!

By David Renzelman, Crime Specialist / Evidence Technician  
Pasco (WA) Police Department

Please enjoy these full-color photos, then continue with the article for discussion and explanations.



Photo above is "pre-class," wasting immense amounts of space. Photo on right shows storing the same handguns, readily accessible, in 30% of the space.

Photo below is "pre-class" long gun storage. Bottom and right photos show organization using some "customized" and reasonably priced gun racks.



continued as **Class** on page 58



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Amount	_____
Date	_____
Ck	_____
Member #	_____
(Evidence Log 2005 - 3)	

I am applying for the following class of membership:

- Active \$50.00 (U.S. dollars)
- Associate
- (for Accounting Purposes our Federal ID # is 88-0296739)

Applications submitted January 1st to October 31st. will be applied for current year.  
 Applications submitted November through December will be applied toward following year.  
 Please type or print clearly

Name \_\_\_\_\_ (First) \_\_\_\_\_ (MI) \_\_\_\_\_ (Last) E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Title / Rank \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Agency \_\_\_\_\_ Bus ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

Business Address \_\_\_\_\_ Fax ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

Residence Address \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Applicant \_\_\_\_\_

Sponsor \_\_\_\_\_ Active IAPE Member

Send Mail to your:

- Business
- Residence

I don't know an active member at this time. Please accept my application.

Have you previously been a member of IAPE? \_\_\_\_\_ If yes, when? \_\_\_\_\_

**Requirements for Membership**

**Active Members** - (a) The following persons shall be eligible for active membership: (1) Property/evidence officers, technicians, specialists, clerks, or custodians directly assigned to the property/evidence function, or supervisors having actual supervision of the property/evidence function, and receiving salaries from any legally constituted national, state, provincial, county, municipal, or other duly constituted law enforcement agency/jurisdiction including railroad police system, or public police or sheriffs department. Active members retain their active status upon retirement, provided there is no interruption in membership.

**Associate Members** - (a) Any person not eligible for active membership, but qualified by training and experience in law enforcement activity, or by professional attainments in police science or administration, shall be eligible for associate membership in the association. (b) Associate members shall have all the privileges of active membership, except for holding office and voting.

(c) The following classes of persons are eligible and qualify for associate membership: (1) Personnel employed by a public law enforcement agency. (2) Employees of city, county, state, provincial, and national agencies with technical responsibility for law enforcement related storage of property/evidence. (3) Prosecuting attorneys and their deputies of city, county, state, provincial, territorial, and national governments. (4) Employees of accredited colleges and universities engaged in teaching, research and other phases of criminal justice. (5) Staff or employees of crime institutes, governmental research bureaus, coordinating councils, law enforcement associations, and similar agencies engaged in research involving the property/evidence storage function. (6) Persons who have made a significant contribution to the field of law enforcement property and evidence. (7) Any retired member of a law enforcement agency.

### Class . . . from page 55

An Open Letter to Joe Latta, IAPE's primary Property and Evidence Management instructor:

Before I attended your class in Portland (OR) this year, our pistols were stored on two floor shelving units that went almost to the ceiling, as shown in the top left photo on page 55. The shelves were spaced 18 inches apart, providing plenty of access space and room for pistols laying flat on the shelf.

Your comments about wasted shelf space really struck home, however. As soon as I got back, we invested in pistol boxes and rearranged the spacing between the shelves to store our pistols as you taught, with the boxes on edge and the shelves spaced just an inch or so above the single row of boxes. Now we store the same number of handguns or more using well less than half of the space we did use before the modifications that I learned in your class. It's also quicker to find the sequentially numbered boxes, to return them to the proper space, and to consolidate the inventory when gaps result from weapon releases and destructions.

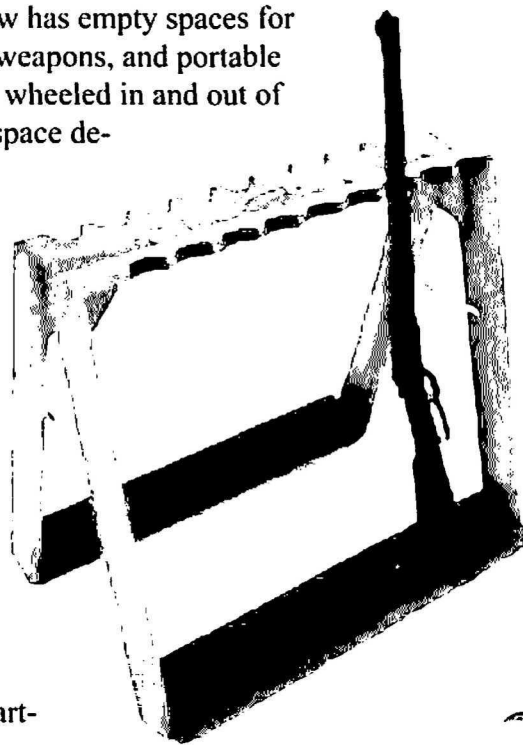
We also had rifles and shotguns just lying in piles on the floor, as shown in the second photo in the left column on page 55. That was partly because the wall rack was full, and partly because the rack would not accommodate very long shotguns, very short rifles or shotguns, or rifles with telescopic sights. Our high security vault did have a nice wall rack to store our long guns, but if the weapon was too short, too tall or had a scope on it, it would not fit on that rack. The short ones were just leaned up against the wall.

Our space in the high security vault is limited, but since you drilled into us that we should "be innovative" looking for solutions to storage issues. While searching for a solution, we located a nifty rifle rack on the internet for a reasonable price. You can see what we did at <http://www.gunstands.com/rifle.htm>, or in the two photos at the bottom of page 55. We called Gayle Finch

(the owner/operator of the company), and explained our predicament. He took the basic design of his A-frame Rack which folds up flat for storage when it is not needed, and custom mounted each gun rack on a platform with wheels for us. All I had to do was sit the rack in the platform frame and insert the supplied wheels in the frame, which was a cake walk

We ordered four racks, with one of them modified to accommodate short weapons, mostly sawed-off shotguns and rifles. The mobile racks are shown in the lower right photo on page 55, with the center rack being the one that was modified for the shorter weapons by raising the support bracket for the butts of the guns. The other three racks are standard size and each accommodates nine rifles with scopes on each side. That capacity enabled us to get our excess and unusual rifles up off of the floor, and out of the unsightly and unprofessional piles (professionally designated as Pile A, Pile B and Pile C.)

Note that the high security wall rack now has empty spaces for normal size weapons, and portable racks can be wheeled in and out of that area as space demands and inventory dictate. These portable racks can be purchased for around \$100 each and shipped to your Depart-



continued as Class on page 59

**Class . . . from page 58**

ment within two weeks. My intended message is simply to share with others that if a department is on a tight budget, like most of us are, that there still are ways to implement professional procedures without spending a great deal of money.

I talked to the owner regarding the needs of other property and evidence units, and he advised that he can accommodate the needs of virtually any department, and that he is looking forward to talking to our members. Gayle is a retired County Agent, and would be quite willing to work with any other agency that is faced with situations similar to the one I was in.

Lastly, I have my one year with this department this month and look forward to taking your on-line exam for IAPE Certification. Your course is priceless and I will attend another one next year. Thanks for the tips, the training, and the interaction with you and all of the other attendees. I have benefited greatly from the class, and I hope my experience can now be of service to those whose ideals have helped me and my property room.

Sincerely,

Dave Renzelman, Evidence Technician  
Pasco (WA) Police Department ◆

**Highlights . . . from page 51**

**The Boston (MA) Herald**

May 5, 2005

By Tom Farmer

**HEADLINE: Narc squad blasted in trial**

A state police sergeant allegedly was able to steal "pounds and pounds" of cocaine because the department's oversight of confiscated narcotics was "sloppy and lax," a prosecutor said yesterday. The system was so flawed, the prosecutor said, that troopers were allowed to bring seized drugs home with them and some filed "false reports" indicating drugs were picked up by two troopers as required by regulations, when they actually picked up drugs alone."

There were few policies. They were outdated and they were not adhered to," he said in his opening statement in the Dedham Superior Court trial. The sergeant, 42, is accused of stealing and selling up to 27 pounds of cocaine and other narcotics while assigned in 2002 and early 2003 to the state police Narcotics Inspection Unit.

The defense said state police oversight of seized narcotics was so bad that prosecutors won't be able to prove the sergeant stole drugs.

\*\*\*\*\*

**The Daily Oklahoman (KS)**

April 9, 2005

By Carrie Coppemoll, Staff Writer

**HEADLINE: Former deputy admits taking \$1,100 in cash**

The deputy, 35, pleaded guilty to felony embezzlement at a preliminary hearing in Bryan

County. He was given a one-year deferred sentence, which will allow him to avoid jail time and clear his record if he stays out of trouble until April 8, 2006, a court spokeswoman said. Overton must repay the stolen cash by May 5, according to court documents.

The money was first discovered missing when a district attorney asked for it for a trial, the Sheriff said. Law officials typically deposit large amounts of confiscated cash within a few days, he said. The deputy was fired in November, and had worked for the department six years as a jail administrator and detective.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Edmonton Sun (Alberta, Canada)**

April 23, 2005 Saturday

**HEADLINE: Peel Cop Swiped Drugs**

A former Peel policeman was sentenced to eight years in jail yesterday for trafficking drugs he took from police evidence worth about \$2.5 million on the street.

The officer, 60, pleaded guilty to possession of cocaine for the purpose of trafficking, possession of hashish for the purpose of trafficking and breach of trust. He was sentenced to six years each for the drug possession, to be served concurrently; and an additional two years for breach of trust. He had been an officer for 30 years, and managed to sneak six kilograms of cocaine and about 20 kg of hashish from police property rooms in 2004, said the federal Crown attorney. ◆

\*\*\*\*\*

## *Rest In Peace*

*The Anchorage (AK) Daily News has reported that  
Angelita "Angie" Maria Gast, 53.*

*died on August 28, 2005, at Elmendorf Air Force Base Hospital.  
Services were held at the Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Wasilla.*

*Mrs. Gast was born Feb. 27, 1952, in Santa Maria, CA, and moved to Alaska in 1989. She worked from April 1990 until her passing as an Evidence Custodian with the Alaska State Troopers. She was an IAPE member and host of the Wasilla (AK) Property and Evidence Management Class. Mrs. Gast was a member of the Sacred Heart Catholic Church, and was an associate member of the Vietnam Veterans of America, and the Alaska Peace Officers Association. She enjoyed knitting, crocheting, fishing, snow machining, four-wheeling, hunting, photography, gardening and taking care of her family.*

*Her family wrote:*

*"She was like a breath of fresh air when she entered a room.  
All who knew her loved and respected her. We will miss her dearly."*

*Angie is survived by her husband Noel and many relatives, including six grandchildren.*

*Memorial donations may be sent to:*

*Sacred Heart Catholic Church - 1201 Bogard Road - Wasilla, AK 99654.*

## *Alphabetical Advertiser Index*

Boldface font indicates full-page or larger ads - Underline indicates color ads.

<p><b>Ace Software Technologies, Inc.</b> 37</p> <p>American Locker Security Systems 33</p> <p>Courterport Corporation 26</p> <p><b><u>DSM Law Enforcement Products</u></b> <b><u>6 &amp; 7</u></b></p> <p><u>Elastec "Drug Terminator"</u> 32</p> <p>Electrocorp 41</p> <p><b>Equipto</b> 17</p> <p>Evi-Paq 11</p> <p><b><u>EvidenceOnQ</u></b> <b><u>Inside Front Cover</u></b></p> <p><b>Fitzco, Inc.</b> 39</p> <p><b>Kardex</b> 10</p> <p><b><u>Kart Digital</u></b> <b><u>30 &amp; 31</u></b></p> <p>Kinderprint Company, Inc. 27</p> <p>Lightning Powder Company, Inc. 26</p> <p><b><u>Loma Industries</u></b> <b><u>54</u></b></p> <p><b>Lynn Peavey Company</b> 15</p>	<p><b><u>Metro</u></b> <b><u>56</u></b></p> <p><b><u>Pacific Concepts</u></b> <b><u>29</u></b></p> <p><b>PERCS Index, Inc.</b> 22</p> <p><b><u>PMI Evidence Tracker</u></b> <b><u>5</u></b></p> <p><b><u>Porter Lee (BEAST)</u></b> <b><u>Inside Back Cover</u></b></p> <p><b>Property &amp; Evidence By the Book!</b> 42 &amp; 43</p> <p><b>Property Bureau (PropertyRoom.com)</b> 13</p> <p><b>QueTel</b> 9</p> <p><b>Safe Store, Inc.</b> 47</p> <p>Shamrock Sales 46</p> <p>South East Sales 41</p> <p><b><u>Spacesaver</u></b> <b><u>53</u></b></p> <p><b><u>Spex Forensics</u></b> <b><u>32</u></b></p> <p><b>Tuflock</b> 50</p> <p>WireCrafters 40</p>
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# ***The International Association for Property and Evidence, Inc.***

***903 North San Fernando Boulevard, Suite 4  
Burbank, California 91504-4327***

***Office (818) 846-2926      FAX (818) 846-4543  
1 (800) 449-IAPE (4273)***

***Visit Our Home Page At <http://www.iape.org>  
Contact us at [www.iape.org/form\\_contact.html](http://www.iape.org/form_contact.html)***

***Membership / Renewal form is located on Page 58***

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