

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR PROPERTY & EVIDENCE

Property Room Standards

5. LONG TERM STORAGE OF EVIDENCE

Certain items of evidence require additional security precautions because of its very nature. Currency, firearms and narcotics are among the most critical that require enhanced levels of security. Additional items of value, such as negotiable securities, precious metals, precious and semi-precious stones, and collector coins and stamps should be handled in a similar manner to ensure its safety.

Such enhanced security may consist of a separate room or area, within the confines of the main Property Room that is segregated from the main Property Room by a locked and alarmed door.

Firearms should be segregated from other items of general evidence and stored in a uniform manner, within the confines of an area with enhanced security. This may be a separate room, or an area that has been segregated by security screen. Firearms should be stored in a manner consistent with the overall filing system used throughout the Property Room. Rifles and shotguns should be placed in vertical racks or in rifle boxes to permit a consecutive and systematic filing system. Handguns should also be placed in handgun boxes and filed in a consecutive and systematic manner. Place rifle and handgun boxes on edge to permit easy retrieval. Use additional shelves if necessary - do not stack boxes one on top of another. Firearms from active cases should be in one location, and firearms pending destruction should be in another.

Currency should always be stored in a “vault” segregated from other forms of evidence in a storage manner that is consistent with the filing system used throughout the Property Room. The “vault” may be a large walk-in safe, a secure closet, or even a secure file cabinet depending upon the volume of items anticipated. Whatever type of currency storage selected, the “vault “ should be secure, independently keyed, and placed in an area where it is covered by an intrusion alarm. Additional security can be achieved by placing the currency vault in an area that requires a second person to gain entry. Foreign currency is normally not counted as having value; however, significant sums exceeding the conversion costs should be safeguarded with the same consideration as U.S. currency. Currency from active cases should be stored in one location, and currency pending deposit to Finance should be in another.

Narcotics should also be stored in a “vault” segregated from other forms of evidence in a storage manner that is consistent with the filing system used throughout the Property Room. The “vault” may be a large walk-in safe, a secure closet, or even a secure file cabinet depending upon the volume of items anticipated. Whatever type of narcotics storage selected, the “vault “ should be secure, independently keyed, and placed in an

area where it is covered by an intrusion alarm and has adequate ventilation to control noxious odors. Ventilation is of special concern with narcotics. Narcotics fumes should not be circulated within a common ventilation system. Exhaust ducts that vent directly to the outside are highly recommended for property rooms. Additional security can be achieved by placing the narcotics vault in an area that requires a second person to gain entry. Narcotics from active cases should be in one area, and narcotics pending destruction should be in another. Narcotics that are stored for use in “stings” should be segregated from both of these former types. Narcotics for stings should also be submitted for storage in a sealed container with two signatures (one supervisor) to insulate the Property Room from any Investigative Division responsibility. Nothing precludes the enhanced security recommendations for firearms, currency, and narcotics from being combined into one secure area with three distinct storage facilities.

Homicide evidence, by the nature of its long-term storage, should be grouped together and relegated to those areas that are least accessible in the Property Room. Special attention should be given to ensure that biological evidence is not exposed to any heat greater than normal room temperature. Bio-hazardous evidence should also be labeled and placed in a temperature-controlled area. Homicide related weapons and narcotics should be stored in the designated narcotics and firearms areas, not with the homicide evidence.

Found Property and Safekeeping, because of the short-term nature of its storage should be placed in one of the more accessible areas and segregated from other items. A quick visual check of these shelves should give an indication if adequate purging is taking place.

Audiotapes and videotapes should be placed in a location that is temperature and humidity-controlled, and free from magnetic fields. High voltage wires, transformers, and electric motors may generate strong magnetic fields.

Hazardous materials and flammables do not belong in the Property Room; however, small quantities and samples may be stored in adequate containers in an area designated for such storage. Such storage may be in a designated cabinet that is placed in a location where fumes would not contaminate the building’s HVAC system.

Oversize items, cold storage, hazardous materials, and flammables are frequently grouped together in an outbuilding or an exterior storage area. Latent fingerprints and film may be stored in an evidence technician’s office due to its need for frequent access, but all such items should be maintained in a secure file and the chain of custody accurately noted.

It is important to remember that departmental materials and supplies should not be commingled with property and evidence.