

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR PROPERTY & EVIDENCE

Property Room Standards

6. LAYOUT ISSUES

The property room should be located in a convenient place within the department. A basement area is acceptable as long as access to the parking lot for loading/unloading is available. Many agencies have found that placing the evidence room adjacent to an area set aside for report writing is most beneficial. In this configuration, pass-through lockers can be used by officers to pass evidence into the property room upon completion of their reports. The room should also have a secure service counter for the public. Within the designed system, there should be a duress alarm and a video surveillance camera system.

Some agencies use satellite or off-site locations for the storage of property and evidence. This can cause security problems, increase transportation and employee costs, and can make property/evidence pick-up and return difficult. Satellite or remote locations should have the highest level of security possible. It is generally desirable to keep the property and evidence facility within the agency's building and/or grounds.

A well-designed property/evidence room will provide office space outside the actual storage area. Having the office adjacent to the storage area provides a work environment without compromising the items under its control.

Policies need to articulate numbering systems, labeling of shelves and guidance to where certain items should be stored. Newly employed property room personnel need to be provided with information on all facets of the Property Room function, including numbering and location of segregated items. Items should be submitted in a variety of different size manila envelopes and then stored by the Property Control Number in sequential order. "A" size envelopes are stored in "A" bins, while "B" size envelopes are stored in "B" size bins. All efforts need to be taken to ensure that items are never stacked one upon the other or one behind the other. Any time items have to be moved to retrieve another can increase labor costs significantly.

Being able to specifically identify and document each storage location used by the agency is a critical step in the evidence function. All rooms, bays, bins, shelves, racks, and containers need to have a clearly readable address. Most Property Officers become quite familiar with their environment, and have no doubt about where things are. Unfortunately, relief personnel and supervisors must also work in the same environment, and they too should be knowledgeable on how to locate items. Every effort needs to be made to guarantee that all locations are properly marked. Using an organized numbering system that is specific is a critical element of the system. Utilization of a computer database with bar codes and assigned storage locations assists greatly.

A suggested scenario for developing an overall organization pattern would be:

- Review the historical record of the types and quantities of evidence that are regularly booked into the property system. Design packaging containers based on the majority.
- Designate particular areas of the storage facility for particular types of evidence. For instance, safekeeping near the public counter, and homicide evidence in the farthest location.
- Decide on some standard packaging options and shelving/container combinations. If shelving is fixed, design your containers around the shelving sizes. If shelving is adjustable, use containers that are standard sizes to minimize costs. If several standard size envelopes were designated, then the appropriate containers, drawers, and bins could be designed to store selected envelopes in specific shelving locations. The use of high-density (mobile) storage shelves is the most effective method to significantly increase storage space.

By developing the packaging standard around the shelving and bin configuration, or vice-versa, a department can maximize the efficiency of property storage, and minimize the effort it takes to store and retrieve it.