

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR PROPERTY & EVIDENCE

Property Room Standards

9. DOCUMENTATION

Written policy should guide employees on how property and evidence is to be documented on departmentally authorized forms. The guidelines may be in the form of a General Order, S.O.P., Training Bulletin, Packaging Manual, or some other official communication for which accountability can be obtained. A general principle applicable to all situations is that whenever property or evidence is seized from someone, a receipt must be provided, and there is documentation and strict accountability of the ultimate disposition of the item.

Policy should include that evidence is to be booked by the end of each watch, what forms are to be completed, how evidence is to be marked and positively identified, and how many and what types of items may be booked together. As a general rule, firearms, currency, and narcotics should not be listed on the same property report with general evidence items due to its unique security requirements and purging issues.

Separate reports should also be completed when guidelines should disallow booking items such as “miscellaneous jewelry”; all items should be individually documented and tagged.

Policy should require all serialized property to be run through a state database for a stolen query and entered as evidence. Policy should require any firearms to be verified through a state database and then entered. The Property Officer should always verify serial numbers and compare the description of the item with the actual item for accuracy. The Property Officer should again verify the numbers and the description of items when they are released.

All official forms should be approved through a standardized process, given a departmental control number, and a date modified. “Unofficial” forms that are created by individuals in small work groups to solve specific problems should be referred to a management committee for approval. Supervisors must be aware of unofficial forms that are created by well-intentioned employees.

The entry of property into the Property Room begins with documentation of who placed the items into temporary lockers and when. This date and time should be placed on the original property booking sheet that describes each individual item and what case it pertains to. This property booking sheet should be considered a “master copy” with original signatures, and should be sent to Records. Carbonless copies should be considered as a duplicate original for both the Property Room and the Investigation Division use. A larger number of items can be itemized on additional pages, if necessary.

The receipt of property begins with the Property Officer removing the items from the temporary lockers and noting the date and time it actually came into the Property Room's possession. This factor is not critical because many jurisdictions consider the item to be in the Property Room's possession when the locker door is slammed shut. The receipt of the evidence should be recorded in a logbook, on the property booking sheet, or in the evidence management computer. A sequential and unique control number, different from the DR case number should be assigned to each property item. This prevents more than one item from having the same number.

The location that the items are designated for storage may be placed on the property form or in a computer program if an automated system is used. If an automated system is in use, is there adequate back up? If not, consider keeping a file copy as a backup record. If a manual system is in use, file the active cases together by control number or chronologically in one file and closed cases in another. The property reports for Found Property and Safekeeping should also be segregated because of their short turnover.

Information needed on a property report form:

- Submitting Officer Information
- Case Number
- Control Number
- Bar Code Number
- Item Number
- Description line for each item
- Owner, Victim, Suspect box
- Address of party involved
- Phone number of party involved
- Type of Crime (Robbery)
- Felony / Misdemeanor / Infraction / Other
- Date / time item was submitted
- Receiving Property Officer Information
- Removed from locker by:
- Date / time received
- Stored by: (placed on shelf by)
- Location stored
- Chain of custody locations: court, lab, etc.
- Detective / Investigator responsible for case
- Detective Approvals
- Approval signature to release, destroy, divert
- Approval Date
- Description of items to be released / destroyed (items numbers, etc)
- Documentation when the card or letter was send
- Property Room History – Released or Destroyed
- Name of person property is to be released to
- Address of person property is to be

- Drivers license or other government ID of person
- Release by
- Date of release
- Destroyed by
- Date of destruction
- Chain of location – court, lab, etc.

Suspense Files (Tickler Files)

A “tickler file” is a manual method of placing items, such as property reports, in one file in chronological order. This order will permit the Property Officer to quickly examine the date an item was submitted for possible purge review. This method of filing will also permit a Property Officer to quickly determine when a certain period of time has elapsed, for example the 90 days needed on Found Property and 60 days for Safekeeping items.

This type of chronological date stamping is also possible to program in a well-structured computer program. Such files are useful to monitor the following:

- Currency Ready For Transfer
- Firearms Ready For Destruction
- Narcotics Ready For Destruction
- Items Ready For Auction
- Card/Letter Sent
- Out To Court
- Out To Lab.

An automated computer report may be substituted for these types of files.