

# IAPE STANDARDS SECTION 2 - POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

## Standard 2.1: Policies and Procedures – Written Directives

**Standard:** The submission, handling, storage, and disposition of property and evidence needs to be documented in written policies and procedures.

**Definition:** Written directives are policies or guidelines placed in written guidelines to provide direction and understanding of responsibilities, duties and tasks.

**Reasoning:** In order to clarify and standardize the procedures for the submission, documentation, packaging, storage, movement, security, purging and disposition of property/evidence, it is imperative that directives be used to guide the operation of an agency's property and evidence handling. These directives should clearly define the duties and responsibilities of any agency employee who takes part in the seizing, handling, storage, or disposition of property/evidence, and these directives should be regularly updated to reflect legal and policy changes. It is also important that such orders and directives be disseminated in a systematic manner to those persons who will be held accountable by these policies and/or procedures.

**General Orders/SOPs:** It is critical that a law enforcement agency's property and evidence General Orders (G.O.s) and Standard Operating Procedures (S.O.P.s) contain policy statements for the submission, receipt, handling, transfer, and disposition of all property and evidence. These written directives should establish rules that apply to all employees of the agency as they pertain to property and evidence and include such areas as:

- requiring all property/evidence to be logged into agency records as soon as practical
- requiring all property/evidence to be placed under the control of the property room before the officer ends his or her tour of duty
- requiring a numbered report detailing the circumstances by which the property and evidence that comes into the agency's possession and describing each item of property/evidence submitted
- requiring that a written receipt be issued to the finders/owners of property that is taken into custody with information on how to retrieve the items retained, when applicable; i.e., found property and safekeeping
- assigning the responsibility to identify and notify the owner or designee regarding the disposition of property/evidence in the agency's custody
- establishing procedures for the temporary release of property/evidence items from the control of the property unit; i.e. court, prosecutor, crime lab, and other agencies

- requiring employees who submit evidence to comply with established packaging directives
- requiring employees to comply with purging and review notices that have been disseminated from the property officer

Packaging Manual: Law enforcement agencies should develop specific guidelines for the packaging and labeling of property/evidence that meets the needs of their agency and the crime lab servicing the agency. These guidelines should be disseminated in a manner that all persons who book property/evidence have access to the guidelines and are held accountable to follow them. One recognized method would be to develop a guide that provides both written instructions as well as photographs that illustrate the required packaging protocol.

Property Unit Procedures Manual: A law enforcement agency should develop or compile and publish a detailed Property Unit Procedures Manual on the receipt, handling, storage, and disposition of property/evidence for property unit personnel. Additionally, the Property Unit Procedures Manual should provide both supervisors and managers with detailed descriptions of subordinate responsibilities.

The elements contained in a Property Room Procedural Manual should include, but are not limited to:

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|-----------------------------------|----------------|
| • receipt of evidence             | • auction      |
| • documentation                   | • diversion    |
| • assignment of storage locations | • release      |
| • temporary releases/movement     | • housekeeping |
| • tickler files                   | • audits       |
| • purge review protocols          | • inventories  |
| • disposition of evidence         |                |
| • destruction of evidence         |                |
| •                                 |                |

All directives and manuals should be reviewed and updated annually by the supervisor or manager to ensure that policies and procedures are up to date, necessary, and feasible.