

IAPE STANDARDS SECTION 3 – PACKAGING

Standard 3.1: Packaging Requirements

Standard: Packaging should be used to protect items from the loss of evidentiary value from cross-contamination or unintentional obliteration while permitting uniform storage of like sized envelopes, boxes, or bags.

Definition: Packaging refers to the manner in which items with potential evidentiary value are wrapped, bagged, or boxed to be preserved, documented, and labeled.

Reasoning: Guidelines should be developed in a manner that provides the submitting employee direction in the approved method of both documenting and packaging property and evidence. The purpose of appropriate packaging is to both protect the evidentiary value of the item inside while providing a uniform size container that permits more efficient storage and retrieval.

In order to provide necessary information to the submitting employee, the agency should develop what it considers to be appropriate packaging methods **based upon the needs of the crime lab used by the agency** and its own storage requirements.

A packaging manual that uses digital photos with a brief narrative description should be considered to best illustrate the approved method. The below list is a generic example of items that are commonly submitted to property rooms and should have packaging standards developed that are consistent with the lab and department storage needs:

- ammunition
- bicycles
- bio-hazardous materials
- bladed or pointed weapons
- bulk items
- cell phones
- computers
- money
- digital media
- documents
- electronics
- explosives/fireworks
- firearms
- flammables
- hazardous materials
- jewelry
- latent fingerprints
- magnetic storage media
- drugs
- photographs/film
- sexual assault evidence
- syringes/sharps

Departmental policy should clearly state that any deviation in packaging methods that does not meet the property unit's standards will be refused and the booking

officer shall be notified through normal channels to correct the problem. This principle is known as the “Right of Refusal”.

Regardless of the packaging method used, the package should have an identifier (e.g., case number, control number, item number, etc.), which corresponds to the item description noted on the property/evidence report (e.g., evidence tag, property sheet, property receipt, property invoice, etc.). A package containing numerous “miscellaneous items” that may be of value should be refused.

Biohazard labels should be available and used on all items suspected of being contaminated with body fluids. Evidence sealing tape should be placed on all packages where contamination or integrity may become an issue. Color-coded stick-on labels may be used to designate specific types of evidence, such as homicide related, Officer-Involved-Shooting, Found Property, and Property for Safekeeping. Color-coded labels can also designate what year the item was taken into custody.