

Appendix IV Recommended Considerations for Protecting the Chain of Evidence

A robust approach to exhibits must occur to ensure that the chain of evidence is preserved. This appendix provides some basic recommended considerations to relevant jurisdictions and ship's security that may augment local procedures to protect the chain of evidence.

Packaging

These steps should be followed to package exhibits as they are taken.

Step	Action
1	Package, seal and label exhibits as soon as they are taken. Note: Where possible take the packaging to the item and not the item to the packaging. Do not reuse packaging and other containers.
2	Securely seal all packaging and containers with adhesive tape on all edges and sign across the tape. (Staples should not be used). Ensure the packaging is appropriate for the item. For example, items for fingerprinting should be packaged so that the item surface does not rub against the inside of the package. Do not reopen after sealing until examination stage.
3	The finder of the exhibit attaches an exhibit label to the outside of the item's packaging including these details: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • exhibit number • description of item collected • location of the item • time and date found / collected • name of person from whom exhibit was seized (if applicable) • by whom collected.
4	Store and transport control samples and items from each suspect / victim / scene in separate outer containers (e.g. large paper sacks).

Exhibit schedules

Prepare a schedule of exhibits in cases with many exhibits (example below). The schedule must be passed onto the lead jurisdiction.

Exhibit schedule example

Exhibit ref no	Description	Location	Seized by	Time & date	Exhibit movements	Time and date
AB1	1 X pair blue jeans	MS Pacific Sun: Cabin 1234	Constable Any Body, NZPOL (Auckland)	25/07/07 1025hrs	O/C Exhibits NZPOL O/C Exhibits AFP	25/11/09 1045 hrs 27/11/09 0930 hrs.

Chain of evidence

The 'chain of evidence':

- includes the receipt, control, security, continuity and co-ordination of all exhibits and their subsequent movements and examinations. The chain must be accurately recorded for each exhibit
- demonstrates all individuals who have had custody of the exhibit and the integrity and storage of that exhibit

All exhibits must be collected, packaged, stored, submitted for further examination (if applicable) and presented in line with good practice. This protects the integrity and admissibility of the evidence from the crime scene to the court room.

Police need to get personnel and equipment into a scene and exhibits out with the minimum of post incident contamination. As personnel and equipment attend many scenes, sometimes on the same day, the risk of cross contamination is always a threat to forensic evidence. All serious scene equipment and individuals must be decontaminated between scenes and records kept to show this.

Minimising contamination risks

To minimise contamination risks the basic steps below should be considered:

Step	Action
1	Preserve and control the scene.
2	Use protective clothing, including face masks and double gloves, removing the outermost gloves between the handling of each exhibit.
3	Use new, clean packaging materials (sterile containers are required for some evidence types).
4	Keep accurate scene activity and exhibit seizure records.
5	Keep records of personnel attending and examining scenes.
6	Avoid examining associated serious crime scenes (including the victim) and the suspect. Use different staff to deal with suspects and victims. The person dealing with the suspect should not have been to the scene or dealt with the victim.
7	Ensure exhibit integrity, continuity and anti-contamination procedures with correct recording, packaging, sealing and labelling.
8	Obtain elimination fingerprints, footwear impressions and DNA swabs when necessary from individuals who could have inadvertently contaminated the scene.