



# INDIANA STATE POLICE LABORATORY DIVISION

## PHYSICAL EVIDENCE BULLETIN

### EVIDENCE PACKAGING and SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

**INTRODUCTION:** This Indiana State Police (ISP) Laboratory Division Physical Evidence Bulletin (PEB) provides general evidence packaging and submission guidelines. For specific collection, packaging, and submission instructions refer to the PEB for that type of evidence. If you are unsure the ISP Laboratory Division can perform the type of analysis you need or have any questions or concerns regarding this or any other PEB, please contact the Regional Laboratory serving your area before submitting any evidence.

#### **I. PHYSICAL EVIDENCE PACKAGING GUIDELINES**

- A.** Proper packaging, sealing, and labeling of evidence are the responsibilities of the submitting agency. Package each item in a clean, unused container that is large enough for the item. Do not try to pack items into containers that are too small. The container should be large enough that it can be opened, repackaged, and sealed following analysis. Packaging shall also be large enough to allow the Laboratory Division barcode label to be fully affixed to it. Each container shall be sealed, and initialed or signed across the border of the seal and the package, in such a way that it cannot be opened without obvious signs of tampering. At a minimum, mark each container with the agency name, agency case number, agency item number\*, and initials on the seals using indelible ink (e.g., Sharpie) or printed labels. Ball point or gel ink pens should not be used since these sometimes puncture plastic evidence packaging.

\*NOTE: Do not duplicate item numbers. Each item in a case shall have a unique identifier.

#### **B. ACCEPTABLE PACKAGING CONTAINERS CAN INCLUDE:**

1. Paper bags or envelopes (do not use windowed envelopes)
2. Plastic bags
3. Cardboard boxes (do not use windowed boxes)

4. Small glass vials/bottles with leak-proof lids
5. Metal cans with leak-proof lids

**C. ACCEPTABLE SEALS:**

1. Evidence tape
2. Packaging tape (e.g., Mylar or reinforced)
3. Heat seal (for plastic packaging)
4. Chemical seal on a plastic bag, if all gaps in the plastic bag are sealed

NOTE: Do not use duct tape, medical tape, masking tape, scotch tape, staples without tape seals, or twist ties.

**D. ACCEPTABLE MINIMUM INITIAL MARKINGS ON SEALS:**

1. Paper bags - initial top and bottom edges of tape on both sides of the package or ends of tape
2. Heat seal - initial over heat seal
3. Chemical seal - initials over the seals on underside of the plastic flap
4. Cardboard boxes - tape over top and bottom flaps and sides and initial top, bottom, and sides or ends of tape
5. Manila envelopes - initial top and bottom edges of tape on both sides of the package, or top, bottom, and ends of tape.
6. Glass vials - vials and small bottles should be sealed inside a plastic bag
7. Metal cans - tape over top and sides - initial top and both sides
8. Sexual Assault kits – tape over designated space on sides of kit and initial on ends of tape

NOTE: Initials shall cross over from tape to packaging. Initials shall be identifiable to the person sealing the evidence and made using indelible ink.

**E. SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR PACKAGING CERTAIN ITEMS OF EVIDENCE:**

1. For an evidence item that cannot be sealed in its entirety (e.g., bulky items), contact the Laboratory Manager for guidance prior to submission. Those area(s) recognized as having evidentiary value shall be protected from loss, contamination, or deleterious change. Additionally, with some large items it may also be recommended to swab or sample the item in other areas prior to submission to allow for potential future analysis of evidence from the unsealed or unprotected portion without risk of contamination. Consideration should also be given to handle and store the evidence in such a way to protect the evidence handlers and other evidence from biohazards and DNA that may be present on the unprotected area(s).

2. Questioned Documents - mark packaging before placing the item inside. Use minimal pressure when initialing seals.
3. Latent Prints - do not use plastic packaging for any item that may require latent print examination. Paper bags or cardboard boxes better preserve latent print evidence. Manila envelopes or packaging that is too small may obliterate potential latent prints when the item rubs against the packaging.
4. Biological Evidence - securely affix a biohazard sticker to the outside packaging of hazardous biological evidence in a conspicuous place when a biological fluid (e.g., blood, saliva, semen, etc.) is expected or presumed to be present. Swabs for potential touch DNA do not require a biohazard sticker.
5. Taser cartridges - package each probe separately in a pill box leaving the wire leads attached. Place the two pill boxes, wires, and cartridge all together in paper packaging. Wire leads should not be cut because of electronic function testing that can be performed by the manufacturer. The outside of the packaging should be marked with the word "Sharps" in a conspicuous place.
6. Firearms - For the safety of all who handle a firearm, all efforts shall be made to ensure the firearm is submitted unloaded. Individuals who package firearms for submission to the ISP Laboratory Division shall mark on the outside of the packaging, "UNLOADED", communicating to everyone involved that the firearm is indeed not loaded with a cartridge. Loaded magazines and/or loose cartridges can be included in the same package as the firearm, but must be packaged in an envelope or paper bag.

## **II. EVIDENCE SUBMISSION GUIDELINES**

### **A. GENERAL EVIDENCE SUBMISSION GUIDELINES:**

1. The ISP Laboratory Division shall only accept evidence associated with criminal investigations from government agencies for criminal prosecution. Evidence will not be accepted from private attorneys or individuals.
2. Do not submit items for continuity only. The ISP Laboratory Division only accepts items for analysis.
3. Do not submit multiple items in one (1) sealed container/package. Cross contamination may occur when multiple items are packaged together, which may interfere with analysis.
4. Syringes with or without needles, injection pens, and other medical devices with needles will not be accepted for analysis.
5. Do not submit functioning explosive devices for laboratory analysis.
  - a. No evidence shall be accepted that contains explosive material in the form of a granular, solid, liquid, or gas, which is capable of igniting resulting in deflagration, explosion, or detonation.

- b. Rendered safe explosive devices (IED), hoax devices, and debris from post blast investigations may be accepted with the approval of the Laboratory Manager.
  - c. The ISP Laboratory Division shall be notified of such evidence prior to submission.
  - d. A letter or an electronic communication from a certified Explosive Ordinance Disposal person shall be required indicating that the submission has been examined and determined to be safe.
6. Requests for expedited analysis should be an infrequent occurrence. Cases may not be eligible for a rush request due to the nature and number of items submitted, Forensic Scientist availability, analytical complications, and statutory requirements. A minimum of a 30-day notice shall be required for rush analysis requests. When multiple types of forensic examinations are requested for rush analysis, the submitting agency shall also prioritize the order of the forensic examination to be performed. Cases requiring multiple types of forensic examination may require more than the 30-day notice due to the complexities involved.

**B. IN-PERSON EVIDENCE SUBMISSIONS:**

1. Scheduled in-person appointments are the preferred method for submitting physical evidence to a Regional Laboratory.
2. Appointments may be scheduled by calling or emailing the Regional Laboratory in your area (see contact information noted below).
3. Regional Laboratory hours are 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. local time, Monday through Friday, and closed all state holidays.
4. The submitting agency is responsible for transporting evidence to a Regional Laboratory and picking it up after laboratory analysis is completed.

**C. MAILING EVIDENCE:**

1. The submitting agency shall email a copy of the Request for Laboratory Examination Form to the Regional Laboratory serving your area for review and approval by the Laboratory Manager, prior to mailing the evidence. Do not mail the evidence until approval is received.
2. It is not recommended to mail evidence that has a court date within 90-days. Contact the Regional Laboratory serving your area to schedule an appointment for evidence submission when this circumstance arises.
3. Do not submit any evidence for biological examination through the mail. These items are best preserved when stored in a cool and dry condition, refrigerated, or frozen.
4. Do not submit arson evidence or ignitable, flammable, or combustible liquids through the mail.
5. Do not submit corrosive materials or liquids for analysis through the mail (i.e., acids, bases, oxidizers).

6. Do not submit any clandestine drug lab evidence through the mail.
7. Mailed evidence shall be packaged in bubble wrap or other crush resistant packaging.
8. If you choose to mail evidence, use one of the following methods:
  - a. United States Postal Service – Certified or Registered
  - b. Commercial delivery service with traceable shipping
9. Do not place any markings on the mailing container that would identify the contents as evidence.
10. Do not seal the Request for Laboratory Examination Form inside the item of evidence. Place the form inside the mailing container but not inside the item of evidence.
11. Shipments containing more than one case or numerous items are discouraged and the submitting agency may be requested to deliver the evidence by appointment to the Regional Laboratory serving your area.

#### **D. SUBMISSION OF EVIDENCE BY ELECTRONIC METHODS**

1. Electronic submission of evidence may be permitted through the ISP Department email address at [esubmission@isp.in.gov](mailto:esubmission@isp.in.gov) or file sharing site as directed by ISP Laboratory Division personnel.
2. All electronic evidence shall be accompanied by a Request for Laboratory Examination Form.
3. On the Request for Laboratory Examination Form, all electronic items submitted for examination shall have file names associated with an agency item number and each item shall be described as electronically submitted.
4. The potential for examination is directly related to the digital image quality, therefore minimum standards shall be met for electronic evidence submissions. Any deviations in image quality shall require the approval of ISP Laboratory Division personnel.
5. [Detailed instructions](#) are available on the Laboratory Division's website.

### **III. RETURN OF PHYSICAL EVIDENCE**

- A.** Physical evidence submitted for analysis will only be retained by the ISP Laboratory Division during analysis except for biological subitems created during the analysis process.
- B.** If any subitem is created from biological evidence it will be retained by the ISP Laboratory Division.
- C.** The submitting agency will be advised on the Certificate of Analysis when biological subitems are created and retained by the ISP Laboratory Division.

- D. When the analysis is complete, the physical evidence will be returned to the submitting agency or the ISP District except for biological subitems created during the analysis process.

#### **IV. Request for Laboratory Examination Form**

- A. The submitting agency is responsible for completing the Request for Laboratory Examination Form, including accurate descriptions of all evidence items.
- B. Do not use abbreviations or ditto marks on any Laboratory Division form. All information shall be complete and accurate.
- C. When known, suspect, and/or victim names shall be included on the Request for Laboratory Examination Form to match necessary information with department or agency inquiries and subpoenas.
- D. For each item of evidence, the submitting agency shall indicate on the Request for Laboratory Examination Form the type of forensic analysis to be performed.
- E. A completed Request for Laboratory Examination Form shall be emailed to the Regional Laboratory serving your area prior to the scheduled date of evidence submission. A minimum of two days prior to submission is preferred. Request Forms received less than 24 hours prior to submission may be subject to rescheduling.
  - 1. Evansville Regional Laboratory: [ERLEvidence@isp.in.gov](mailto:ERLEvidence@isp.in.gov)
  - 2. Fort Wayne Regional Laboratory: [FWRLEvidence@isp.in.gov](mailto:FWRLEvidence@isp.in.gov)
  - 3. Indianapolis Regional Laboratory: [IRLEvidence@isp.in.gov](mailto:IRLEvidence@isp.in.gov)
  - 4. Lowell Regional Laboratory: [LRLEvidence@isp.in.gov](mailto:LRLEvidence@isp.in.gov)
- F. Evidence Specialists will check the completeness of the Form(s) and correspond via email and/or phone to make any required changes.
- G. The Request for Laboratory Examination Form is dynamic. When completing the Form, additional fields may appear depending on the fields in which the information is entered or boxes checked.
- H. The Request for Laboratory Examination Form is available on the ISP Laboratory Division's website (<https://www.in.gov/isp/labs/evidencesubmission-protocolsforms/>).
- I. The expiration date is clearly recorded on the Request for Laboratory Examination Form. The current version of the Form can be downloaded from the [ISP Laboratory Division's website](#).
- J. Instructions for completing the Request for Laboratory Examination Form will appear when the cursor is placed over a field in the form. An instructional PowerPoint® is also available for review on the [ISP Laboratory Division's website](#).

## V. Contact Information

For additional information contact the ISP Regional Laboratory in your area or visit the ISP Laboratory Division website.

Evansville (812) 867-3157 or toll free (800) 852-3970

Fort Wayne (260) 436-7522 or toll free (800) 552-0976

Indianapolis (317) 921-5300 or toll free (866) 855-2840

Lowell (219) 696-1835 or toll free (877) 874-0009

Website <https://www.in.gov/isp/labs/>