

Booking Biological Evidence

(Amends DGO 6.02, Re-issue DB 16-096, Supersedes DB 17-132)

The purpose of this Department bulletin is to outline policy and procedures for booking biological evidence.

Biological evidence, including bloody clothing, DNA swabs from evidence, contact DNA, and oral or penile swabs have historically been booked in the freezer, designated by attachment of a “FREEZER” label to the packaging.

Studies now show that proper packaging of dry biological evidence does not require freezing to maintain the integrity of DNA evidence. All such evidence shall now be booked with only “BIOHAZARD” labels as appropriate, and shall be stored at monitored room temperature in Property Control Division. “Room temperature” implies an approximate acceptable range of temperature and humidity levels as recommended by the NIST/NIJ Evidence Preservation Handbook published in 2013. This range satisfies all good faith effort to protect biological evidence from moisture, excessive heat, and sunlight, which have the potential to complicate and compromise DNA testing.

The proposed evidence storage conditions cited were adopted from best practices agreed upon by the Technical Working Group on Biological Evidence Preservation which includes members from police agencies, public defenders, Innocence Project, NIJ, FBI and ASCLD/LAB. These conditions are consistent with the ASCLD/LAB-ISO requirements and the FBI Quality Assurance Guidelines which require that storage conditions be such as to prevent deterioration and maintain integrity of stored evidence.

The use of “FREEZER” labels on biological evidence is **discontinued**. This policy does not apply to liquid samples (tubes of blood or urine), used condoms, or extractions (DNA extracts from evidence by Crime Lab).

This procedural change amends Department General Order 6.02 E 8, which references the use of “FREEZER” labels.

The following procedures shall be followed in the interest of best practices:

Bloody clothing

Items of clothing shall be air-dried, wrapped separately in clean property bags and placed in an evidence bag. Attach a “BIOHAZARD” label to the bag.

Swabs

All swabs, regardless of source, shall be labeled and placed within the 'Tyvek' envelopes included in the swab kits. These shall be booked in an evidence envelope as normal.

Sexual Assault Evidence

Bed sheets, blankets, towels or clothing containing possible DNA evidence shall be wrapped separately in clean property bags and placed in an evidence bag. Attach a "BIOHAZARD" label to the bag. Air-dry prior to packaging if necessary.

CSI shall be notified and scheduled to collect bloody items that must be air-dried prior to packaging and booking.

Condoms

Officers shall use fresh latex gloves to gather each used condom and each used condom wrapper. Officers shall also use sterile plastic cups (commonly used to collect urine samples) to hold each used condom. Condom wrappers can be packaged in an unused coin envelope or a similar type of unused envelope. The sterile cups are readily available at the Department's Property Division, and Commanding Officers should instruct their facilities managers to stock their stations or units.

Procedure:

1. With fresh gloved hands, the officer can break the sterile cup's seal, remove the cap, pick up the condom by its base/rim, place it in the cup and replace the cap.
2. When collecting multiple condoms, officers shall handle each condom separately using fresh gloves every time and place each condom in a separate cup.
3. These shall be booked in separate evidence envelopes, and shall have a "Freezer" label attached, per the "liquid sample" exception.
4. With fresh gloved hands, the officer can pick up the condom wrapper and place it in a coin envelope. The wrapper shall be booked in a separate evidence envelope and does not need to be marked "Freezer".

Officers assigned to the Airport Bureau will follow the San Mateo County Sheriff's protocol for Booking of Biological Evidence.

WILLIAM SCOTT
Chief of Police

Per DB 17-080, both sworn and non-sworn members are required to electronically acknowledge receipt and review of this Department Bulletin in HRMS.