



## EVIDENCE SECURITY, STORAGE AND MAINTENANCE

EP2

- A. Purpose** – Ensuring the evidence is secured, properly stored and that the storage area is appropriately maintained is critical to the integrity of the evidence.
- B. Scope** – This policy/procedure applies to all CBI-FS personnel who handle evidence from receipt to return.
- C. Quality Requirements**
1. Unlimited access to the evidence vault is limited to those who are authorized by the Laboratory Director.
  2. Anyone without unlimited access to the evidence vault shall be escorted inside the vault at all times.
  3. All evidence will be stored in a manner that prevents loss, cross-transfer, contamination or deleterious change.
  4. Evidence storage areas will be audited per QP15, Audits.
- D. Procedure**
1. Evidence Vault Security
    - a. Evidence vaults must be secured at all times. This includes:
      - i. Ensuring doors are closed and locked unless appropriate personnel are present;
      - ii. All vaults are armed with intrusion alarms and, if applicable, will be protected from water.
    - b. Access
      - i. Access to the evidence vault is restricted to those routinely performing the duties of a Technician in a particular laboratory and anyone authorized unlimited access by the Laboratory Director. All CBI-FS Management personnel shall have unlimited access to the evidence vault.
      - ii. Individuals may be granted temporary access for the following reasons to include but not limited to: training, special projects, large submissions, and maintenance.
    - c. Records of Access
      - i. Entry into the evidence vault is monitored by the proximity card security system or by the Evidence Vault Temporary Access Authorization Log.

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- ii. The respective Laboratory Director is responsible for approving unlimited access and must maintain an up to date log of authorized personnel using the Evidence Vault Unlimited Access Authorization Log.
- iii. The Evidence Vault Unlimited Access Authorization Log will be maintained in the Vault Log Binder at each vault location to ensure that all CBI-FS personnel know who is authorized to enter the evidence areas and the dates of authorization. In some cases, the date may be open ended.
- iv. Any individual granted temporary access to the evidence vault shall be escorted by a person with unlimited access to the evidence vault who will initial the Evidence Vault Temporary Access Authorization Log.

**2. Evidence Storage****a. General**

- i. All evidence in the custody of the CBI-FS shall be stored in a secured evidence vault unless the evidence has been checked out for analysis, is stored in a short term storage area, is being transferred to another laboratory location, is too large, or any other reason deemed appropriate by CBI-FS Management.
- ii. If additional evidence storage is necessary, a secure location must be utilized.
- iii. Only those with unlimited access to the evidence vault will have access to the additional storage areas unless it is in the custody of the Forensic Scientist.
  - (1) These storage locations must be appropriately documented in the chain of custody through LIMS.
- iv. Submission lockers may be utilized in the absence of a Technician for a new submission, when a discrepancy arises with a new submission that cannot be rectified immediately, or for internal evidence transfers.
  - (1) Submission lockers must be checked at the earliest convenience of the Technician.
    - i. Evidence must be removed from the submission locker within a week.
    - ii. If the evidence cannot be removed from the submission locker in a week, a deviation request must be made in Qualtrax requesting a specific amount of additional time.
  - (2) For a new submission, the date the evidence was placed in the locker will be the date the evidence is received in LIMS.

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- (3) For internal evidence transfers, the Forensic Scientist will transfer the evidence from any location in the LIMS where evidence can be transferred.
  - i. The Forensic Scientist must change the storage type to “Placed in Storage”.
  - ii. The section must be changed to Evidence.
  - iii. The appropriate lab Submission Locker will be selected as the Storage Area.
  - iv. The Storage Location will be the Locker where the evidence was stored
  - v. The appropriate Transfer Reason will be selected.
  - vi. A Comment will be added if necessary.
  - vii. The credentials of the individual transferring the evidence will be required to complete the transfer in LIMS.
  - viii. The Evidence Technician should be notified that evidence has been placed in the locker.
- v. Evidence in the process of examination
  - (1) Evidence removed from the vault for processing shall be under the Forensic Scientist’s control. The following storage is allowed during the times noted:
    - i. The Forensic Scientist’s restricted access work area(s) during duty hours;
    - ii. Temporary storage which may include secure locations such as lockers, cabinets, rooms and containers.
    - iii. Evidence should be secured appropriately for overnight and weekend storage when possible.
    - iv. Rooms designed for processing of evidence may be used to temporarily secure evidence during nonworking hours if they are appropriately locked and the evidence is protected;
    - v. Evidence on analytical equipment for examination may be left unattended in the restricted access processing areas when necessary;
    - vi. Some circumstances (i.e. large items) require evidence to be left in a limited access area. Evidence may be left unattended in a limited access area (i.e. garage) as long as the area is made secure to the same standard as a restricted access area.

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- (2) The agency case number and item number will be verified by the scientist prior to beginning the exam.
- (3) Evidence in the process of examination does not need to be sealed each time it is stored. All evidence will be stored in a manner that prevents loss, cross-transfer, contamination or deleterious change.
- (4) If a scientist receives evidence at one CBI Laboratory but transports it to another location for exam, the evidence custody must reflect the lab where the evidence was opened. (ie. Evidence checked out in Denver but transferred to Boulder for exam must be in the scientists Boulder custody.)
- (5) Evidence will not remain in personal custody for more than six months from the time of removal from the vault.
  - i. If the evidence must remain in personal custody for longer than six months a written request must be sent to the supervisor and the Quality Manager.
  - ii. The supervisor can approve additional time. That approved time must be clearly indicated and documented in the Case Record.
  - iii. Evidence should be returned to the evidence vault as soon as possible after the report has been released if not sooner.
- vi. Storage between exams
  - (1) Short term storage may be used
    - i. Storage location must be secured by a keyed lock.
    - ii. Access is restricted to individuals issued a key.
    - iii. Audits will be conducted on the same schedule as the evidence vault.
    - iv. Evidence must be stored in a sealed condition.
      1. Exception: toxicology vials do not need to be sealed between exams
      2. Toxicology vials will be stored capped and protected from loss and contamination
    - v. Evidence must be transferred to and from storage location in FA-LIMS to accurately reflect the correct chain of custody.
    - vi. Evidence will not be in short term storage longer than 6 months.
3. General Maintenance
  - a. Any CBI-FS employee who observes a problem with an evidence seal, packaging, labeling or storage shall immediately correct the problem and contact CBI-FS Management if necessary.
  - b. If necessary, problems with evidence handling, sealing, packaging, labeling, and storage will be addressed via QP11, Quality Incident Review.

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- c. Any area that houses evidence must be neat, organized and clean.
- d. The method of organization within the evidence storage areas will be clearly and thoroughly communicated.
  - i. The primary method for organizing evidence will be to sort by evidence return, for analysis and temporary intake.
  - ii. Any individual involved in evidence storage will be responsible for maintaining organization.
- e. Temperature Monitoring
  - i. All refrigerators/freezers utilized to store evidence will be temperature-monitored through Rees.
  - ii. See QP29 Temperature Monitoring for further information.

**E. References Used**

- 1. Forensic Advantage Software

**F. Additional Factors**

When possible, *The Biological Evidence Preservation Handbook: Best Practices for Evidence Handlers* will be followed. This can be found online on the NIST website.