NSW Police Force

Forensic Evidence & Technical Services Command

CRIME SCENE MANUAL (GENERAL)

This document **MUST** be read in conjunction with Crime Scene Manual (General):

1.0 Hazards & Control Measures
2.0 Contamination Prevention

7.0 EVIDENCE MANAGEMENT

7.1 GENERAL INFORMATION

The term "evidence" refers to exhibits, specimens and any other item collected in relation to an investigation.

Assess and address WH&S issues when collecting, handling, packaging and labelling exhibits.

When collecting handling, packaging and labelling items, wear the appropriate level of Personal Protection Equipment (PPE).

Tailor evidence collection techniques to each individual evidence type and its overall physical condition.

The term 'forensic facility' used in this procedure relates to both FETSC laboratories and crime scene sections.

7.1.1 Items Examined /Collected by FETSC Staff

All whole items/ exhibits should be managed as below:

Non-complex examinations (at crime categories within the SOCO guidelines)

Items that have been adequately examined (including Fingerprints), recorded and sub-sampled at a scene are generally not required to be retained as evidence (see also SOCO Guidelines).

Complex/Non-complex examinations (at crime/incident categories outside the SOCO guidelines)

All whole (moveable) items/exhibits that have probative/evidentiary value, and that would normally be collected as part of the examination, must still be collected and retained. Regardless of whether it is to be examined and sub-sampled at the scene or later at an FETSC facility, all exhibits collected should be transported directly to a PAC/PD for storage. In limited circumstances where items may require immediate examination, drying, or other urgent processing, the item may be transported directly to a FETSC facility.

Regardless of where the item is initially conveyed:

I. The item must be entered into EFIMS at the first available opportunity (the scene, the PAC/PD, or at the FETSC facility).
II. Items should not be kept on hand at a FETSC facility indefinitely.
III. Items taken to a FETSC facility should be examined or otherwise processed as soon as practicable and then returned/forwarded to the investigating PAC/PD for storage.
IV. Items that have been sub-sampled at the scene and / or require no further examinations should be transported directly to the PAC/PD for entry onto EFIMS and storage.

7.1.2 Management of Items Collected by Non FETSC Staff

In many situations, non-FETSC personnel will collect exhibits for forensic examination from crimes/incidents. In these instances, the investigating officer must request examination of the collected items to their local crime scene section by creating an analysis request job on EFIMS. A determination will then be made regarding the complexity of the examinations required. If the examination is deemed non-complex and the crime category falls within SOCO guidelines, then a SOCO will be allocated to attend to the examination of the item at the PAC/PD. If the item requires a complex examination and/or originates from a category of crime outside SOCO scope, then a FETSC Supervisor will request the Investigator bring the item to a crime scene section on an agreed date and time where an assessment/ examination will be made.

FETSC staff will be allocated to conduct an examination of the item and take sub samples of biological material where required. FETSC personnel will forward the collected sub samples to FASS, while the remainder of the items are returned to the Police station with the Investigator.

If items have been collected by PAC/PD investigators from a crime/incident scene where FETSC has conducted examinations, (e.g. during an investigative search warrant at a homicide scene) then the request for examination of these items should be referred to the FETSC officer already involved in the matter.

In the case where SAIK or PM kits come into the possession of PAC/PD investigators, these kits must be forwarded by that investigator directly to the FASS for analysis.

7.2 PACKAGING

Package all items in an approved and appropriate bag or container. Ensure that the correct EFIMS barcode sticker is placed on the outside of the bag. Remember to place the small XF barcode EFIMS sticker on the analysis-ready tube using a white tube tag.

Assess the packing requirements of each item to:

i. physically protect the item from damage
ii. protect the integrity of evidence
iii. maximise the potential evidentiary value of the item
iv. minimise the disturbance of physical and/or trace evidence upon the time
v. eliminate the chances of cross-contamination
vi. reduce flammable/biological hazard risks to handlers.

Paper bags -

Store an item of biological significance or susceptible to moisture degradation in a paper bag, including:

i. blood stained clothing
ii. wet or damp item
iii. organic material (e.g. cannabis plants)
iv. shoes.

Plastic bags

Use a plastic bag if an item:

i. is not susceptible to degradation or decomposition
ii. will not have its evidentiary value diminished

If an item is very wet or heavily blood stained:

i. Place it in a plastic bag at the scene
ii. Leave the plastic bag open
iii. Package the plastic bag in a sealed, appropriately labelled paper bag at the scene before sending it to the relevant forensic facility
iv. When it reaches the forensic facility, remove the item from the plastic bag as soon as possible
v. Retain the paper bag and the plastic bag
vi. Air dry the item in an approved Forensic Evidence Drying Cabinet
vii. Repackage the item in the original paper bag
viii. Thoroughly examine the plastic bag for trace evidence before discarding/retaining it, as appropriate.

Rigid Containers

Use rigid or fixed form containers in instances where the use of either a paper or plastic bag would not:

i. maintain the integrity of an item (e.g. fragile items requiring protection)
ii. provide adequate Work Health & Safety protection (e.g. for hypodermic needles, knives, broken glass)
iii. Suitably contain the item (e.g. flammable liquids)

Multiple items

Where a number of items are collected and individually packaged at a scene, place them in a larger bag/container for transportation and containment purposes. There is no need to seal this larger bag/container

Chemically Treated Items

In cases where chemicals have been applied directly to an exhibit (Luminol and LCV) the item must be stored appropriately as it is chemically contaminated.

i. Thoroughly dry the item in a drying cabinet / fume hood / exam table;
ii. Package the item in a clip-seal plastic bag and secure clip-seal with evidence tape;
iii. Place 'Chemical Hazard' sticker on clip-seal bag;
iv. Place clip-seal bag into original paper evidence bag and re seal;
v. Place 'Chemical Hazard' sticker on evidence bag.

7.3 LABELLING

Ensure every item collected is labelled with all relevant and available details.

On the pre-printed label on the front of the paper bags supplied, enter all details available at the time of collection of an item, including:

i. COPS event number (if the item is being submitted to the Forensic and Analytical Science Service for analysis (e.g.) SAIKs etc.
ii. item details (see sections 7.3.1 and 7.3.2 for a guide to labelling exhibits)
iii. time and date of item collection
iv. name of person collecting the item

When using plastic bags or rigid containers, complete an **adhesive** pre-printed label providing all relevant information listed directly above and stick it on the outside of the bag or container.

Place items suitable for packaging in a plastic bag or rigid container into a fully labelled paper bag for security sealing.

For sub-sample envelopes containing analysis-ready tubes, the following fields should be completed:

i. Item Description – this field should include what the sample is and where /what it was collected from (e.g.) '*swab taken from opening area of coke can on kitchen bench at marker A'*. Refer to sections 7.3.1 and 7.3.2 for a guide to labelling exhibits.

7.3.1 Guide to exhibit labelling nomenclature

The following guidelines are recommended to ensure consistency.

General rules:

Exhibit labels should follow the general formulas;

For sub-samples the following information should be included;

1. What type of sub-sample (e.g. swab, tapelift, swatch etc)
2. What it is targeting (e.g. biological fluid or trace DNA etc)
3. Where it's from - the specific area of the item
4. Where it's from – the parent item or marker label and area

e.g. Trace DNA swab from handle of knife
e.g. Trace DNA swab from trigger of rifle
e.g. Trace DNA tapelift from inside cuff of shirt
e.g. Swab of blood stain on kitchen floor at marker A

For other exhibits, labels should include;

1. What it is, including enough information to differentiate from other collected items
2. Where it's from

e.g. Brown Adidas jumper from front passenger seat of vehicle 123XYZ
e.g. Black handled knife from kitchen sink
e.g. Pink Apple iPhone from bedroom floor at marker B

7.3.2 RECOMMENDED TERMINOLOGY FOR EXHIBIT LABELS

Category	Term	Explanation
Firearms & Ballistics	Fired Cartridge Case	Any fired cartridge case; specify if it is a shotgun and calibre of cartridge if known. Don't use FCC
	Cartridge	Unfired cartridge – all components intact
	Gunshot Residue	Don't use GSR
	Firearm	Use if specific type is unknown - don't use 'gun'
	Handgun	Encompassing pistols, revolvers, etc.
	Longarm	If specific type of longarm is unknown (i.e. rifle/shotgun)
	Rifle	
	Shotgun	
	Trigger	
	Trigger guard	
	Grip	
	Sight	
	Hammer	
	Bolt	
	Slide	
	Barrel	
	Stock	
	Calibre	Specify the calibre of the firearm or ammunition is, if known
Vehicles	Steering wheel	Don't use s/wheel
	Doorhandle	The handle used to unlock the door from either side, i.e. not an armrest or doorpull, etc.
	Armrest	The armrest incorporating the doorpull
	Front/rear Driver side	Front/rear offside; don't use FOS/ROS
	Front/rear passenger side	Front/rear nearside (passenger side); don't use FNS/RNS

Category	Term	Explanation
	Gearstick	Any manual or automatic gear shift/transmission in a vehicle, don't use gearshift, gear lever, etc.
	Seatbelt	Any area of the seatbelt other than the buckle
	Seatbelt buckle	
	Headrest	
	Backrest	Any area of the upright component of the seat (not headrest)
	Seat	Any area of the horizontal part of the seat
	Handbrake	
	Grab handle	The handle above window inside (often used for dry cleaning)
Misc	Cable tie	Zip tie/fasteners, specify area targeted
	Headphones	Any listening device that fits over ears
	Earphones	Any listening device inserted into ears
	Mouthpiece or opening	Any area in contact with a mouth, e.g. bottle opening, drinking can opening, area of bong, pipe
	Resealable Plastic Bag	Any ziplock type bag, don't use RPB
	Fingermarks	Any friction ridge detail targeted for swabbing, don't use fingerprints, smudges, etc.
	Glovemarks	Any mark appearing to be from a glove (i.e. roughly finger-shaped, textured or patterned, etc.)
	Handles	Should be the generic term for the part by which a thing is held, carried or controlled; e.g. drawers, furniture, containers, holders, trolleys, bags, tools, etc.

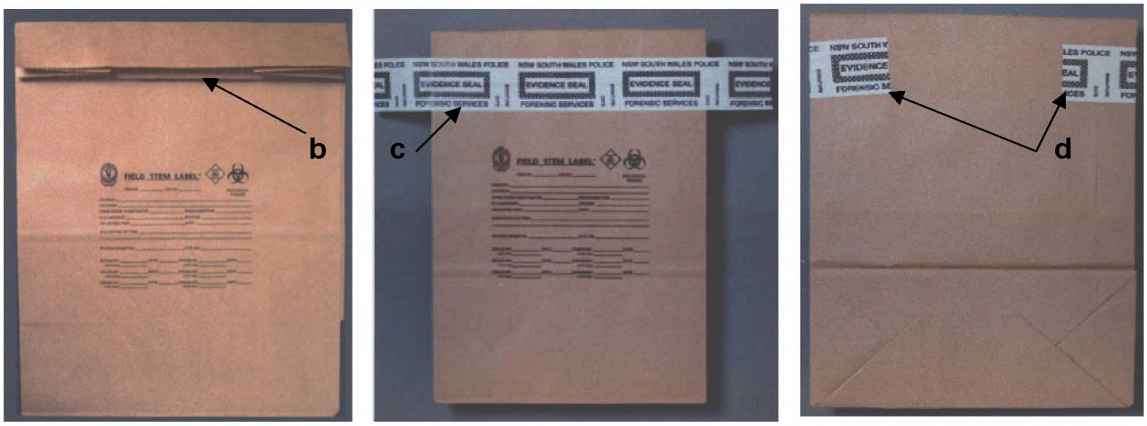
7.4 SEALING

Before leaving the scene, or upon receiving an item from a scene, use evidence security tape to seal all bags containing items. NB This requirement does not apply for sub-sample envelopes containing analysis-ready tubes as these envelopes are submitted directly to FASS for processing. These envelopes are to be sealed using the larger EFIMS barcode sticker.

For other packaging, apply item security seal tape as follows:

Paper Bags (see images below)

i. Fill out the item label on the bag,
ii. Fold approximately 5cm of the top of the paper bag over to the front (printed label side) of the bag,
iii. Cut a length of evidence seal tape longer than the width of the bag to be sealed, allowing adequate tape overlap for the sides of the bag,
iv. Place evidence tape across the front of the bag so it adheres to both the edge of the folded flap and the main body of the bag (i.e. the flap edge is covered by the tape),
v. Sign, date and print the registered number across the evidence security seal tape,
vi. Check that tape is wrapped completely around both sides of bag and adheres properly.



Multiple Item Containers

Individual item bags must be sealed appropriately, but when several items collected from a scene are placed in a larger bag for transportation and containment purposes, it is not necessary to seal the large bag by affixing security seal tape.

7.5 EVIDENCE HANDLING AND RECORDING

All items you collect are required for further forensic examination and analysis. Forming part of the overall police investigation, they are ultimately the responsibility of the PAC/PD in which the incident has occurred.

When possible, hand all exhibits/items directly to the OIC or nominated Exhibit Officer at the scene. Exceptions to this include:

i. items that are wet or contaminated with biological material and require drying
ii. items that are, or may be, contaminated with a chemical or biological agent
iii. country post-mortem exhibit/specimens forwarded directly to the Department of Forensic Medicine, Lidcombe
iv. all sub-samples collected during the scene examination

The following procedures should then be followed:

i. Enter each sealed exhibit/item bag in the Field Exhibit Log at the scene and indicate which items are being collected by the OIC or nominated Exhibit Officer.

ii. The OIC or nominated Exhibit Officer must sign the Field Exhibit Log at the scene as a receipt

iii. The OIC or nominated Exhibit Officer must convey items from the scene to the exhibit handling Police Station nearest the scene

iv. The OIC or nominated Exhibit Officer must ensure the items are entered into EFIMS and secured in the Exhibit Room awaiting further forensic examination. As per Commissioner's Notice 99/1, sealed evidence bags must not be opened by the Station Exhibit Officer for the purpose of inspecting or recording a description of an item.

v. If the OIC is not in attendance at the time of the scene examination, or in minor matters where an Exhibit Officer is not appointed, the Forensic Investigator/Crime Scene officer must convey the exhibits/ items to the exhibit handling Police Station nearest the scene and ensure the items are entered into EFIMS at the earliest opportunity.

vi. Once they have been processed on EFIMS, relevant items should be checked out and conveyed to the relevant forensic facility for further examination

vii. Where it is impractical for the Forensic Investigator/Crime Scene officer to attend the nearest exhibit handling Police Station to enter the evidence items, or where further evidence items have been generated through trace evidence examinations at a facility, the following procedure must be followed:

   a. Package exhibits/items, convey them directly to the relevant forensic facility, and ensure they are entered in EFIMS
   b. secure the exhibits/items in an approved Exhibit Room within the forensic facility
   c. at the first opportunity, transfer the exhibits/items for further technical analysis or forward them to the exhibit handling station nearest the incident.

viii. Where the sub sample has been taken from a collected or seized exhibit, it is best practice for the sub sample to be recorded against the primary exhibit (or 'parent exhibit'). For example, a bloodstained t-shirt can be recorded as a primary or 'parent' exhibit. A sub sample taken from the same t-shirt would be recorded as a 'child' or sub-exhibit; separate but still linked. Where circumstances prevent this practice, the sub sample shall be booked up as a 'primary' exhibit against the Event.

All DNA analysis requests are to be created, tracked and managed on EFIMS. Multiple exhibit items can be submitted under the one DNA Analysis Job. The analysis request should be raised on EFIMS before the sub sample(s) is transported to FASS to allow for the results to be recorded against the item in EFIMS. The Analysis Job should be created using the COPS Event Number. In creating the job select the Service Type as **DNA Analysis** and the Service Provider **DAL – Forensic Biology – DNA Laboratory**. Add the exhibits (sub samples) to the job by scanning the barcode(s) of the items being submitted then submit the job.

7.6 RECEIVING EVIDENCE AT CRIME SCENE SECTIONS

Where practicable, evidence delivered to a forensic facility should not be accepted unless each exhibit/item has been properly entered into EFIMS and all required information has been completed on the exhibit bag(s).

If an exhibit/item is conveyed to a forensic facility without being entered into EFIMS, request the conveying officer to complete the exhibit entry on EFIMS. [redacted] and have not been entered on EFIMS by the collecting station, the receiving officer must enter the information on EFIMS on receipt.

All items received at a forensic facility for examination or storage must be checked in the section on EFIMS. An internal transfer may also need to be entered into EFIMS to show the location of the exhibit as the facilities' designated exhibit storage area.

Where security or tamper evident seals have been applied to an exhibit/item, the seals must be inspected at time of receipt to ensure they have not been damaged or opened.

If, upon inspection, you detect any damage to the packaging or evidence of tampering with the seals:

i. Notify the Submitting Officer and the Forensic Supervisor/Team Leader of the relevant forensic facility or, if the Forensic Supervisor/Team Leader is not present, notify another Forensic Investigator/Crime Scene Officer/Scientific Officer present at the time
ii. make a notation in EFIMS indicating the nature of the damage to the seal and record the name of the submitting officer in the notes field.
iii. examine the case notes and exhibit/item package for a relevant notation indicating a justified opening of the item (e.g. opened by OIC to show a witness)
iv. notify the OIC that the seal of exhibit/item was received in a damaged condition
v. package and reseal the exhibit/item correctly

7.7 STORAGE EVIDENCE

Once they have been relocated to a forensic facility, items of evidence may be held while technical or trace evidence examinations are conducted by the forensic investigator/crime scene officer, and/or for forwarding to an external laboratory.

As soon as practicable after completion of examinations, or upon their return from an external laboratory, the items must be returned to the Police Station from which they were originally received.

Accurately record all movements of items into and out of the forensic facility on EFIMS. Record movement of items through the [redacted] system in EFIMS, noting the security bag or tub number, seal number and [redacted]

Store items in an approved secure Exhibit Room within the forensic facility until additional examinations have been completed.

- Short Term Storage - this is required while specimen/items must be on hand at the forensic facility for specific examinations and tests
- Long Terms Storage - upon completion of all necessary tests, seal and return the item to the originating Police Station or the exhibit handling Police Station nearest to the scene/incident location. *Refer also to Police Service Circular 99/1, Forensic Evidence Management*

Consider individual needs for the storage requirements of various items (e.g. refrigeration for perishable/biological specimens, ventilated storage for arson samples). Refrigerate all biological and arson ashen samples pending transportation to the respective laboratories and forward them to the relevant laboratories at the earliest opportunity.

Sub-samples requiring short term storage until dispatch must be refrigerated or frozen in a designated exhibit storage fridge/freezer at a FETSC facility. These items must be recorded on EFIMS and a 'Check In' transaction created on EFIMS when storing sub-samples temporarily. Where sub samples collected on Fridays, weekends or public holidays require temporary storage at a FETSC facility, it is best practice (for continuity purposes) for those exhibits to be checked in to that facility using the EFIMS transaction 'Check In'. Where other Police storage facilities are used, the exhibit should be checked in by the Exhibit Officer/Supervisor at that facility. An 'Internal Move' transaction is used by the Exhibit Officer/Supervisor to move the exhibit within a storage facility (e.g. Exhibit Refrigerator). This transaction is recorded in the Audit Log and Chain of Custody Report

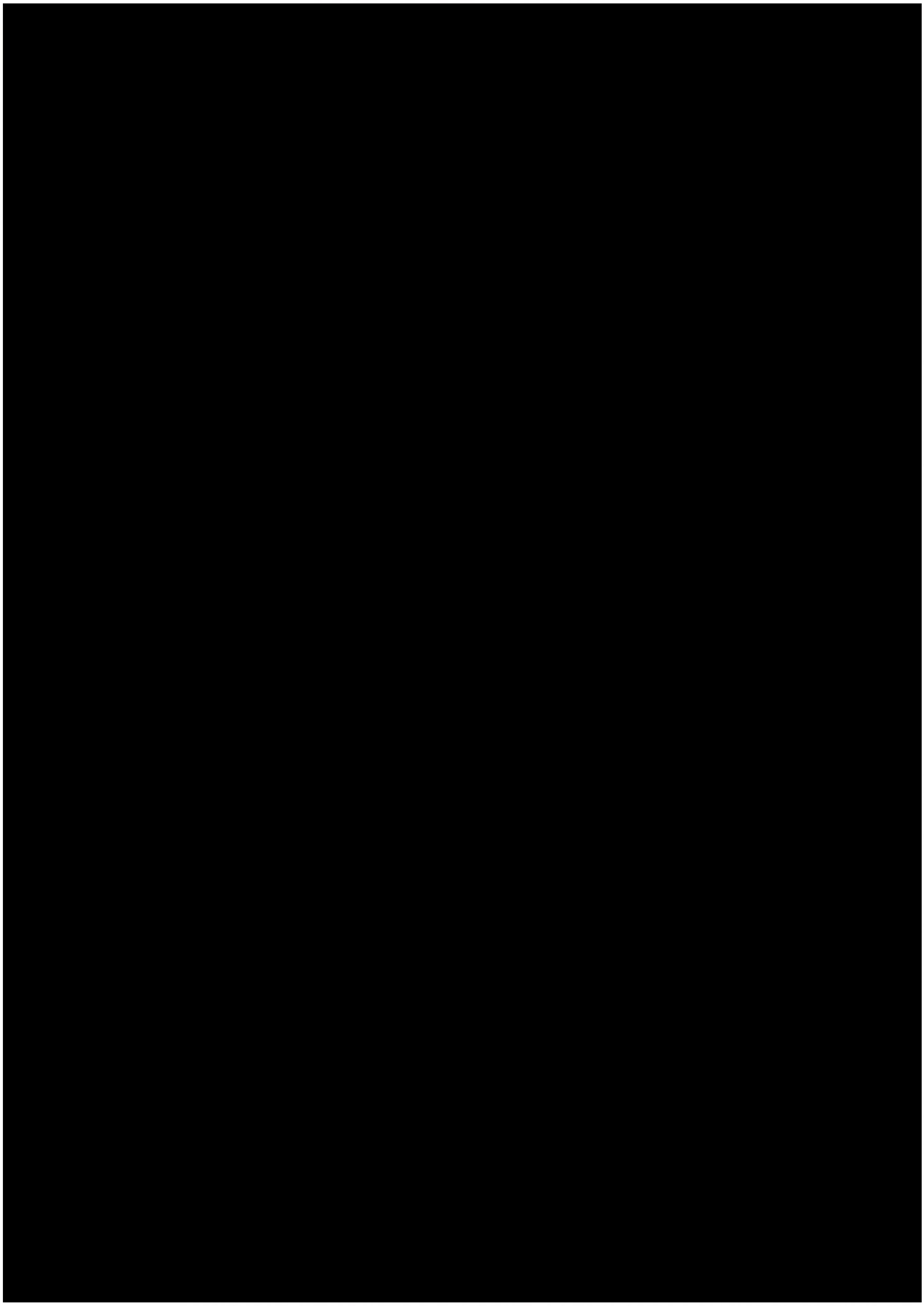
Where appropriate, affix suitable warning stickers to the outside of the exhibit/item package (e.g. biohazard/contaminated waste).

The Zone Manager/Manager or Forensic Supervisor/Team Leader must conduct regular audits of EFIMS to minimise the number of exhibit/items on hand at the forensic facility. When conducting audits, the Zone Manager/Manager or Forensic Supervisor/Team Leader must check that:

i. exhibit EFIMS entries have been completed correctly
ii. all items are correctly packaged, labelled and sealed
iii. all exhibits are secured in the Exhibit Room when not being examined
iv. items are examined and/or forwarded for analysis within reasonable time frames
v. exhibits are returned to PAC/PD as soon as practicable after the completion of examinations.

7.8

[redacted]



7.9 PARKED SAMPLES OVERVIEW

The number of samples collected by CSSB and submitted to FASS directly impacts on the time taken for results to be received by the NSWPF. The workflow of the FASS process can be broken into two components, analysis (an automated system with high capacity) and reporting (a human resource intense process).

All samples collected by the NSWPF must be submitted to FASS for DNA analysis and subsequent reporting shortly after collection. This is to eliminate sample degradation resulting in loss of evidence, due to the inability to store biological samples in the current format for long periods. This may include samples where uncertainty existed as to their probative value at the time of collection. Should it later be determined that these samples had limited probative value, the analysis and reporting will have contributed to the FASS workload, for limited evidentiary value.

To minimise this from occurring, in conjunction with FASS, a process has been developed to PARK samples sent to FASS for DNA Analysis. Samples identified as “PARKED” prior to submission to FASS will undergo DNA analysis, but any resulting DNA profile will not be reported on until it is specifically requested. This request can be submitted after a review has been conducted and the probative value of these samples is clear.

Parking of DNA samples is available for all DNA sub samples relating to complex / major crime. This option must be considered and used where appropriate to minimise unnecessary sample reporting for items with limited evidentiary value.

Detailed information regarding parking of DNA samples can be found at the link below

https://intranet.police.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/file/0020/831341/SOP444_DNA_Sample_Parking_v2.pdf

7.10 EXHIBITS RECEIVED BY FASS DNA BIOLOGY

When exhibits are received by the Biology Lab at FASS, reception staff will scan the EFIMS barcode label. If the exhibit is accepted by the Biology Lab at FASS, the exhibit is recorded in FASS's computer system resulting in a 'check in' movement message being sent to EFIMS. The exhibit status in EFIMS is updated to 'Pending Action'. Similarly, when an exhibit item leaves the Biology Lab at FASS, it will be dispatched from FASS's computer system resulting in a 'check out' movement message being sent to EFIMS and the exhibit status updated to 'In Transit'. Any non-returnable exhibit will result in a message being sent to EFIMS and the exhibit status updated to 'Disposed'.

If the exhibit does not have an EFIMS Analysis Job, FASS will process the request manually. The consequence of this is that the results will not go back to EFIMS and instead will be received by the FIRM as a PDF file for processing. The impact long term is that these results will be unsearchable in the future.

FASS Biology will assign the Analysis Job based on the job priority and commence the analysis. EFIMS will be informed when work commences on the Analysis Job.

7.11 FASS ANALYSIS RESULTS

Results shall be reported against the sub-sample in EFIMS (where an EFIMS Analysis Job exists).

It will be possible for analysis results to be communicated multiple times via the EFIMS-FASS interface, i.e. in an interim result, then later in a Court Report and also link reporting. Results pertaining to analysis ready samples will typically have only analysis outcomes or profiles uploaded, unless a subsequent cold link is generated and a Certificate Analysis is required for Court purposes.

FASS will update EFIMS with confirmed person-to-scene or scene-to-scene DNA profile links identified by either the NSW DNA Database or NCIDD.

The FIRM will verify all Person-to-Scene links prior to informing the OIC and/or Crime Coordinator via EFIMS workflow to their Dashboards.

All Scene-to-Scene links will workflow directly from FASS to the FIRM's Dashboard. The FIRM will be responsible for authorising the release of the result to the OIC.

Where sub samples are submitted to FASS Biology without an EFIMS Analysis Job, the results will not go back to EFIMS and instead will be received by the FIRM as a PDF file. The FIRM will upload the PDF file and distribute to the OIC.