

FBI Laboratory Practices for Handling Drug and Valuable Evidence

1 Purpose

These practices establish the requirements for handling drug and valuable evidence to conform with FBI policies, the requirements of the FBI Laboratory Quality Assurance Manual, and the applicable accrediting body(ies).

2 Scope

These practices apply to FBI Laboratory personnel who handle drug and/or valuable evidence.

3 Practices

Personnel handling drug or valuable evidence will take and record custody of the evidence prior to opening or beginning examinations. Refer to Appendices A and B for a summary of drug and valuable evidence handling requirements.

3.1 Receipt of Drug and Valuable Evidence

3.1.1 Receipt of Internal Submissions

Drug or valuable evidence should be received from an FBI contributor in a plastic heat-sealed evidence pouch or secured with fiber-reinforced packing tape in a box or a box wrapped in brown paper. The evidence should be received bearing a completed *Drug Evidence* (FD-723) label or a *Valuable Evidence* (FD-723a) label.

3.1.1.1 Personnel will appropriately seal the evidence if the evidence is not received as described above. Personnel breaking down the evidence will record the condition in which the evidence was received (e.g., in the check-in notes).

3.1.2 Receipt of External Submissions

Evidence received from an external contributor should be sealed. If the evidence is not sealed, personnel receiving the evidence will record the condition in which the evidence was received and appropriately seal the evidence.

3.2 Opening Drug and Valuable Evidence

Drug or valuable evidence packaging should only be opened for purposes of examination and should not be opened for other purposes (e.g., ensuring the contents).

3.2.1 Personnel will open the packaging in the presence of a witness by cutting along a different point from where the packaging was originally sealed. Personnel will ensure person the contributor's label, seal, and/or initialing remains intact, if possible. The person who opens the packaging will retain the original packaging, including any pieces removed during the opening, for return with the evidence to the contributor. If opening a box or carton, the label may be removed, if necessary, and retained.

3.2.2 Accounting for Drug and Valuable Evidence

3.2.2.1 For any item determined to be drug or valuable evidence, personnel will open and count or weigh the evidence, as appropriate, in the presence of a witness who will confirm the contents are as described (e.g., money count, weight). Prior to opening the evidence or adding labels/barcodes, the gross weight of the suspected non-trace drug evidence and applicable packaging will be recorded in grams on the *FBI Laboratory Drug Evidence (7-248)* (Appendix C). For an evidence item(s) where only drug residue is suspected of being present (e.g., drug wrappings, pipes, scales), the "Trace Amount" box will be checked.

3.2.2.2 Personnel opening and accounting for the contents will compare the count/weight against what was stated in the request for examination and/or on the contributor label. If there is an unexplainable discrepancy between what was received and what was listed on the request for examination and/or contributor label, contact the contributor for further instructions personnel will contact the contributor for further instructions and, if necessary, notify the appropriate Evidence Management Unit personnel. Personnel will record the discrepancy and any contributor instructions on the appropriate communication log (e.g., Case Communication Log, *Activity and Communication Log (7-245)*).

3.3 Recording on the FBI Laboratory Drug Evidence Label or Valuable Evidence Label

3.3.1 The person opening and accounting for the contents and the person witnessing will record the activity on an *FBI Laboratory Drug Evidence* label or an *FBI Laboratory Valuable Evidence (7-287)* (Appendix D) label, as appropriate. The label will be placed on the packaging, ensuring it does not obstruct the contributor's labeling in any way. The reverse side of the packaging may be used when necessary.

3.3.2 For evidence submitted as suspected drugs, personnel sealing the contents will record the gross weight on the *FBI Laboratory Drug Evidence* label after sealing the packaging. A witness will sign the *FBI Laboratory Drug Evidence* label recording the activity. The weight of non-trace drugs will be recorded in grams. For evidence where only drug residue is suspected of being present (e.g., drug wrappings, pipes, scales), the "Trace Amount" box will be checked.

3.3.3 For valuable evidence the amount may be recorded on the label (e.g., money count, weight of gemstone).

3.4 Storing Drug and Valuable Evidence

Personnel storing drug or valuable evidence will ensure the evidence is stored in a section safe, unit safe, or a secured area restricted to storing only drug and valuable evidence. Drug and valuable evidence storage locations will be secured for dual-person entry.

3.5 Transferring Drug and Valuable Evidence

Drug and valuable evidence will be separated from other types of evidence when transferred to ensure appropriate handling and storage.

3.5.1 Recording Drug and Valuable Transfers

All transfers, whether person-to-person or to and from storage, will be recorded by two people (e.g., in Forensic Advantage (FA), in the Explosive Reference Tool, on a *Chain-of-Custody Log* (7-243)). For transfers to and from storage, the second person will record their information in the witness field in FA.

3.5.1.1 If FA cannot be used to record the transfer, all personnel who access the drug and/or valuable storage location will record their entry on an *Access Log - Evidence Storage Facility* (FD-455) specific to each drug and/or valuable evidence storage location.

3.5.2 Transfer to Storage for Self-retrieval

When storing drug and/or valuable evidence for self-retrieval, the evidence must be sealed with a proper seal to prevent loss, cross-transfer, or contamination and meet the requirements of 3.5.1. The evidence does not need to be affixed with a completed *FBI Laboratory Drug Evidence* label or *FBI Laboratory Valuable Evidence* label each time it is stored.

3.5.3 Special Circumstances for Sealing for Transfer

For stamps, checks, or drug evidence where the “Trace Amount” box has been checked, the item(s) may be transferred within the unit or for photographic purposes with a proper seal. The evidence does not need to be affixed with a completed *FBI Laboratory Drug Evidence* label or *FBI Laboratory Valuable Evidence* label.

3.5.4 Sealing Drug or Valuable Evidence for Transfer

All drug and valuable evidence will be sealed each time the item(s) is transferred outside the unit. Additionally, when valuable evidence (except for stamps and checks) and non-trace weight drug evidence is transferred within the unit or for photographic purposes, the evidence will be sealed each time the item(s) is transferred, whether the transfer is person-to-person or to and from storage. The sealing will be completed in the presence of a witness. When the evidence is sealed, both persons will ensure the contents are as described (e.g., money count, weight).

3.5.4.1 Personnel sealing evidence for transfer will package the evidence in the original packaging, when possible. If the original packaging cannot be reused, the evidence will be packaged in a new package with the original packaging and any pieces removed from it. When packaging the evidence, personnel will ensure the contributor label from the original packaging is visible.

3.5.4.2 If the evidence is of such size as to preclude the use of heat-sealable packaging, the item(s) will be boxed or wrapped in brown paper and secured with fiber-reinforced packing tape, ensuring the tape encircles the package and the ends meet or overlap.

3.5.4.3 The person sealing the contents and the person witnessing will record the activity on the *FBI Laboratory Drug Evidence* label or *FBI Laboratory Valuable Evidence* label. When heat-sealed packaging is used, the heat-seal will be initialed by the person creating the seal. When the item is boxed or wrapped in brown paper, the *FBI Laboratory Drug Evidence* label or *FBI Laboratory Valuable Evidence* label will be affixed to the packaging to ensure it covers all ends of the fiber-reinforced packing tape.

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4 Records

The following records will be generated and/or retained as a result of these practices:

- Communication Log.
- Chain-of-Custody Log.
- Record of the condition in which the evidence was received (e.g., check-in notes).
- *FBI Laboratory Drug Evidence* label or *FBI Laboratory Valuable Evidence* label.
- *Access Log – Evidence Storage Facility* (for non-FA transfers).

5 References

FBI Field Evidence Management Policy Guide, 0780PG. Federal Bureau of Investigation, Laboratory Division, latest revision.

FBI Laboratory Quality Assurance Manual, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Laboratory Division, latest revision.

FBI Laboratory Operations Manual, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Laboratory Division, latest revision.

ISO/IEC 17025 - General Requirements for the Competence of Testing and Calibration Laboratories, International Organization for Standardization, Geneva, Switzerland, 2017.

ISO/IEC 17025:2017 - Forensic Science Testing and Calibration Laboratories Accreditation Requirements (AR 3125), ANAB, Milwaukee, WI, April 29, 2019.

Rev. #	Issue Date	History
8	06/03/19	Summarized handling requirements in Appendices A and B. Replaced combined FBI Laboratory Drug and Valuable Evidence label with separate FBI Laboratory Drug Evidence and FBI Laboratory Valuable Evidence labels in Appendices C and D and throughout document. Reorganized document to improve clarity. In section 3.2.2.1, clarified that evidence is opened in the presence of a witness and that weight is recorded prior to opening or adding labels. Changed evidence management personnel to Evidence Management Unit in section 3.2.2.2. In section 3.5.1, added that person to person transfers of drug and valuable evidence do not require an additional witness. Allowed stamps or checks to be handled in a manner similar to trace weight drug evidence. Modified section 4 as some records are not retained in the FBI Laboratory file. Updated list of references in section 5.
9	12/21/20	Minor typos and edits throughout for clarity. Removed reference to <i>Drug and Valuable Label</i> (FD-723) and clarified “Trace Amount” box will be checked throughout document. 3.1.1 and 3.5.4.3 - clarified fiber-reinforced tape 3.2.2.1 and 3.3.2 - added <i>FBI Laboratory Drug Evidence</i> label (7-248) 3.3.2 - Added witness will sign <i>FBI Laboratory Drug Evidence label</i> 3.5.2 - clarified requirements in 3.5.1 will be met 5 – added LOM Updated appendix A for “Trace Amount” box to be checked.

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Approval

Laboratory Director

Date: 12/18/2020

Quality Manager

Date: 12/18/2020

Appendix A: *Summary for Handling Stamps, Checks or Trace Weight Drug Evidence*

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Appendix B: *Summary for Handling Non-Trace Weight Drug Evidence or Valuable Evidence (except stamps and checks)*

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Appendix C: *FBI Laboratory Drug Evidence Label (7-248)*
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Appendix D: *FBI Laboratory Valuable Evidence Label (7-287)*

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