

Evidence Photography

1 Scope

These procedures describe the process for evidence photography and apply to explosives and hazardous devices caseworking personnel who photograph evidentiary items.

2 Introduction

Photographing bombing evidence in its original condition as received in the laboratory is extremely important because the evidence may be altered during subsequent forensic examinations. Preserving the original condition of the evidence through photography may prove crucial during the latter stages of examination by an explosives and hazardous devices examiner attempting to reconstruct the device.

These procedures are designed to provide a general approach used in the photographic record of evidence. Circumstances may require special techniques or outside assistance not outlined in these procedures. Evidence may be photographed upon its arrival in the FBI Laboratory or in the field.

3 Equipment/Material/Reagents

Below is a list of items that can be used to photograph evidence. Explosives and hazardous devices personnel should choose the most appropriate items based on the nature of the evidence.

- Personal Protective Equipment (e.g., lab coat, eye protection, gloves)
- Cleaning materials and disinfectants (e.g., cloths, bleach, rubbing alcohol)
- Ruler (e.g., standard 12 inch length)
- Camera
- External lighting fixtures
- Computer
- Photographic storage media
- Item Identifier Tabs
- Clean paper (appropriately sized and non-glaring)

4 Standards and Controls

Not applicable.

5 Sampling or Sample Selection

Not applicable.

6 Procedures

These procedures are implemented as part of the overall examination process outlined in the Device Examinations Standard Operating Procedure (SOP). Refer to the Safety section of this SOP before starting any examinations.

Not all evidence requires photographic documentation. Items that will be analyzed by explosives and hazardous devices personnel and detailed in the case notes will be photographed. To best preserve forensic evidence of value, consultation with explosives chemistry personnel and personnel in other units should be made on a case-by-case basis to determine whether specific items should be photographed prior to or after explosives and hazardous device examinations.

- Photographs should be taken prior to evidence analysis if the examinations could alter the appearance of the original evidence (e.g., assembled explosive devices should be photographed prior to being disassembled for detailed forensic analysis unless such action has the potential to compromise future forensic examinations).
- Photographs should be taken after some forensic analyses when photography may compromise those examinations (e.g., loss of trace evidence or explosives residue).

6.1 When photographing in the laboratory, a large sheet of clean paper will be placed on a prepared area. Evidence will be placed on top of the paper with the Item Identifier and the laboratory number associated with the item. A ruler, or some clearly marked scale, will be placed in the field being photographed to provide a means of relative size comparison. Photographs will be taken.

6.2 Before photographing items that are to be examined for explosives residue, the explosives and hazardous devices individual will refer to the Explosives Contamination Prevention SOP for guidance.

6.3 Clean paper will be placed down upon switching evidence items from different scenes.

6.4 When photographing evidence in a field setting, only a ruler or some standard item to designate scale will be required in the photograph. Techniques utilized will be situation dependent and recorded.

7 Calculations

Not applicable.

8 Measurement Uncertainty

Not applicable.

9 Limitations

Some items of evidence may be too large to be effectively photographed. For these items, the assistance of appropriate personnel will be enlisted. Items not amenable to being shipped to the FBI Laboratory can be photographed in the field.

10 Safety

Safety protocols, contained within the FBI Laboratory Safety Manual, will be observed at all times.

10.1 Protective gloves (e.g., latex, nitrile) must be worn when handling items of evidence that have been possibly exposed to blood, tissue, or other bodily fluids. Gloves will prevent exposure of personnel to possible hazardous material on the items and prevent DNA from being transferred to the items.

11 References

FBI Laboratory Division

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.

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

Explosive Devices SOPs, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Laboratory Division, latest revisions.

Other

Kennedy, P.M., Explosion Investigation and Analysis – Kennedy on Explosions, Investigations Institute, 1985

Kennedy, J., Fires and Explosions – Determining Cause and Origin, Investigations Institute, 1990

Sachtleben, D.J., Forensic Examination in Major Bombing Scenes, United States Attorney's Bulletin, Vol. 49, No. 5, September 2001

Thurman, J.T., Practical Bomb Scene Investigation, 2nd Edition, CRC Press, 2011

Rev. #	Issue Date	History
0	07/07/2006	Original Issue to follow QATU formatting and ASCLD/LAB- <i>International</i> requirements
1	10/02/2017	Administrative changes for grammar, clarity, and conformance to revised QAM and LOM. Removed references to the Explosives Unit to applicability to those conducting explosives and hazardous devices related examinations. Deleted Calibration section since it is not required. Updated Limitations section to refer the reader to the Device Examination SOP and Appendix B of the Explosives and Hazardous Devices Report Writing Guidelines SOP. Updated references.

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