

Evidence Photography

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Evidence Photography

1 INTRODUCTION

Photographing bombing evidence in its original condition as received in the Laboratory is extremely important because the evidence may be altered to perform 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 Laboratory or in the field.

2 SCOPE

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

3 EQUIPMENT

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 PROCEDURE

These procedures are implemented as part of the overall examination process outlined in the Explosives and Hazardous Devices Examinations Technical Procedure (TP). Refer to the Safety section of this TP before starting any examinations.

- A. 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 devices examinations.
 - Photographs should be taken prior to evidence analysis if the examinations could alter the appearance of the original evidence (e.g., assembled 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).
- B. When photographing items in the Laboratory, a large sheet of clean paper will be placed on a prepared area that has been cleaned with a bleach-based solution or other appropriate disinfectant. Evidence will be placed on top of the paper with a unique item identifier and the Laboratory number associated with the item. A ruler, or some clearly marked scale, will be placed in the field of view to provide a means of relative size comparison.
- C. Before photographing items that are to be examined for residues of energetic materials, explosives and hazardous devices personnel will refer to the [Explosives Quality Assurance and Operations Manual](#) for guidance.
- D. Clean paper will be used when photographing evidence items from different scenes to avoid the potential of cross-contamination.
- E. When photographing evidence in the field, only a ruler or some standard item to designate scale will be required in the field of view. Techniques used will be situation dependent and appropriately recorded.

5 LIMITATIONS

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

6 SAFETY

Safety protocols, contained within the [FBI Laboratory Safety Manual](#), will be observed at all times.

Protective gloves (e.g., latex, nitrile) should be worn when handling evidence.

Items containing blood or other body fluids can be cleaned with a bleach-based solution or other suitable disinfectant following discussions with personnel that may conduct other examinations of the items.

7 REVISION HISTORY

Revision	Issued	Changes
02	06/15/2022	Updated to new document template and updates made throughout for clarity.