



Evidence Storage

Forensic Science



- The basis of forensic science is analysis, which emphasizes the need for uncontaminated evidence and consequently proper evidence preservation. The storage of important artifacts and objects ensures the possibilities of contamination are reduced to a minimal and therefore, give accurate clues to fuel the investigation.



During An Autopsy

- Properly preserving and storing the evidence is a vital part of the autopsy. At the start of the autopsy, the coroners have to make sure that everything is hygienic, so to avoid contamination of the evidence on the body and also for health reasons. Once the autopsy has begun, samples from major organs, tissues, bodily fluids, blood, hair, fingernails, mouth, sexual organs and rectum are taken and placed in contamination proofed sample containers. The major individual organs are weighed and the containers of samples are then stored in refrigerated storage areas until they can be sent away for further testing and analysis. It is important that the evidence collection and storage is done properly, as this evidence will be included in a coroner's report that will be presented in a court of law.



The Custody Chain

- In terms of evidence storage in general however, the main requirement is, that one or more people will be able to testify for the item's security from the moment it was collected to the object's appearance in court, a process often referred to as the 'custody chain'.
Temporary evidence storage forms the most susceptible link in the custody chain, as this is the period when evidence leaves one officer's hands (usually at the police station) to when the evidence is safely collected by another officer to be stored in the property room. During this period, the evidence should be safely stored in some form of secure storage, for example, in secure lockers with automatic locking systems to prevent the need for keys or locks.



Temporary Storage

- If temporary storage for biological evidence such as bodily fluids or DNA sample is needed, refrigerated or frozen storage compartments may be used where appropriate to keep such evidence from evaporating. Hazardous biological materials, mainly reactive/flammable chemicals, are placed safely away from air vents and air conditioning systems and often in an airtight situation to prevent oxidization or some form of reaction.



Long Term Storage

- Long term evidence storage is slightly different to that of temporary evidence storage. Firearms are stored separately in a secure and confined area with the protection of a security screen and are placed in vertical racks. Vaults or safes are the storage devices for any currency evidence, as would be expected, while audio/video recordings are kept away from humid conditions, magnetic fields and direct sunlight. In general, the storage of the evidence must ensure its security and protection from any form of damage, so as to achieve the most accurate results during analysis.