

5-04/010.50 - Marking of Evidence

The deputy, detective, criminalist, or other specialist finding the physical evidence or receiving it from another person shall mark the evidence as soon as possible. Distinctive marks shall be used so as to be easily identifiable at a later date when necessary to present the evidence in court.

Common marks such as checks or crosses should not be used as they are not sufficiently distinctive. Suggested marks include the initials of the finding officer and the date found.

Care should be used not to damage any existing serial numbers or other identifying marks already on the article. Serial numbers or existing distinctive marks already on the article should be properly recorded in the case report.

No uniform marking system is practical because of the limitless number of articles involved. As a general rule, identifying marks shall be as small as practical.

Every item of physical evidence capable of duplication must be marked by some means that will distinguish it from every other item of like nature capable of appearing to be a duplicate, a facsimile, or identical with the item.

Every such identifying mark shall be made so that it is nondestructive to the utility of the item of evidence and does not seriously reduce the marketable value of the article. The mark shall be one which cannot be readily altered or removed and which shall not reduce the evidentiary value of the item or interfere with work in the laboratory which may follow the collection process. As a final step in the marking process, property labels shall be generated through PRELIMS and securely affixed to all items or packages of evidence, as appropriate.

Items which by their nature cannot be marked shall be placed in a container (e.g., paper bindle, small manila envelope, etc.), sealed, and an identifying mark placed on the container. Items of this nature include fingernail scrapings, hairs, paint scrapings, shotgun pellets, bullet fragments, jewels, etc.

Special handling instructions for a few types of articles are as follows:

Documents - any document which will require scientific examination should be enclosed unfolded in an envelope and whenever practical, marked by the specialist in the presence of the deputy or other personnel submitting such documents.

Fired Bullets, cartridge cases, or other ammunition components should not be directly marked by anyone except for Scientific Services Bureau personnel. Direct marking can potentially damage the evidence or interfere with subsequent laboratory examinations. Identifying markings and information shall be placed on the proximal container, e.g., small clasp sealed manila envelope, jar, etc., which has been properly marked.

Latent Prints developed and lifted by field personnel must be identified by indicating on the lift card where the latent print was obtained.