#### **FAIRFAX COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT**



SUBJECT: CUSTODY OF PROPERTY	NUMBER:	610.1
CANCELS ORDER DATED: 1-1-09	DATE:	4-1-13

### I. <u>PURPOSE</u>

In order to ensure a valid chain of custody for evidence and found property seized or coming into the control of Department personnel; to eliminate the possibility of lost or mishandled property; and to avoid an unnecessary accumulation of property, uniform procedures for the storage and disposition of evidence and other property shall be utilized.

### II. POLICY

The Department takes the management of property seriously, as it has a profound impact on many operations within the agency, as well as the criminal justice system as a whole. Officers are expected to use prudent judgment when impounding property and pay close attention to the rules of evidence. All employees involved in the handling of property shall have thorough knowledge of the policies and procedures surrounding the handling, reporting, and preservation of property. Individuals who do not follow the guidelines contained herein may be subjected to additional training or discipline, as deemed appropriate.

### III. <u>DEFINITIONS</u>

**Administrative disposal**: A process utilized to clear an item's storage location and voucher from the evidence management system.

**Audit**: A review of the policies, procedures, and processes of the property and evidence functions of the agency to determine whether or not they meet the Department's General Orders and Standard Operating Procedures.

**Evidence:** Any property that comes into the custody of the Department, when such property may tend to prove or disprove the commission of a crime or the identity of a suspect, pursuant to an official criminal investigation.

**Found property**: Any property of no evidentiary value, which comes into the custody of the police, and whose rightful owner may, or may not, be known to the finder or to the Department. Due diligence shall be exercised with respect to

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determining the rightful owner. If the owner cannot be determined, the Department shall dispose of the property in a manner prescribed by law.

**Inspection:** A periodic review of designated aspects of the property and evidence functions, such as security, access control, packaging, etc.

**Inventory**: The process of individually checking all, or a specified portion of, the property/evidence items against the agency's records.

**Material**: Used in this General Order to refer broadly to any controlled substance, marijuana, or paraphernalia, as defined by the Drug Control Act of Virginia (from GO 610.2)

**Property**: Used within this General Order to refer broadly to evidence, found property, and property for destruction.

**Property for Destruction**: Any property, including firearms and ammunition, seized from, or released by a citizen to the Department for disposal.

Temporary Property Collection Point: A secure, Department authorized room, designated by each station and certain divisions to house property from the time it is collected by the officer or detective until it is picked up by the Property and Evidence technicians or delivered directly to the primary Property and Evidence Section. This room shall be used solely for holding property, and should be set up so that sensitive items, to include but not limited to, currency, firearms, narcotics, and precious metals, are stored separately and more securely than other evidence. The blue supplemental crime scene lockers used for holding evidence that needs to be processed should also be located in this room. Authorized points include the district stations, the Operations Support Bureau, the Major Crimes Division, and the Organized Crime and Narcotics Division.

**Temporary Property Supervisor:** The sergeant or second lieutenant designated by a station or division commander to oversee the authorized temporary property collection point.

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### IV. <u>SAFEGUARDING PROPERTY REMOVED FROM ARRESTED PERSONS</u>

In order to ensure the safety of the arresting officer and prevent possible harm to the prisoner or other persons, officers shall search all persons in their custody for weapons or other objects which could be used to inflict harm or effect an escape.

#### A. Adult Detention Center

All property, other than evidence or contraband, removed from a prisoner who is to be detained at the Adult Detention Center, shall be turned over to the receiving officer at the booking desk of the Adult Detention Center.

### B. Juvenile Detention Center

All property, other than evidence or contraband, removed from a prisoner who is to be detained at the Juvenile Detention Center, shall be turned over to the shift supervisor at the Juvenile Detention Center.

# V. <u>PROPERTY, OTHER THAN CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES AND</u> CONTROLLED PARAPHERNALIA

### A. Rights of Property Owners and Finders

1. Property acquired by the Department, other than by seizure or required for court, shall be claimed by the rightful owner within 60 days of the date of the Department's possession.

Property seized or otherwise taken possession of by the Department, which is necessary for any court action, must be claimed by the rightful owner within 60 days from the date of the final disposition of court proceedings.

2. If the rightful owner does not claim such property within the 60 day period, the property shall be released to any person who found and delivered, or caused the property to be delivered, to the Department.

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Finders shall claim property within 10 days of the expiration of the initial 60 day period. The finder's failure to claim property within the 10 day period shall be deemed a waiver of any claim the finder may have to the property and the property shall be disposed of as unclaimed property.

Based on Section 2-2-4 of the *Code of the County of Fairfax, Virginia*, finder's rights provided in Section 2-2-1 of the County Code do not apply " . . . to pistols, revolvers, derringers, bowie knives, dirks, sling shots, metallic knuckles, or other deadly weapons of like character . . ." Officers receiving such found property from citizens shall inform the finder of this exclusion.

Finders shall not claim property in the possession of the Department if they are a Department employee, or a member of the employee's immediate family.

3. Exception: Bulky or hazardous property may be disposed of immediately. This includes the disposal of bicycles. Found bicycles for which no owner is known and the finder does not wish to take possession will be disposed of immediately. When the owner is known, bicycles will be held long enough to allow the owner to reclaim them.

### VI. <u>CUSTODY OF CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES AND PARAPHERNALIA</u>

- A. All narcotics held as property shall be stored in the designated narcotics storage within the temporary property collection point or transported directly to the Property and Evidence Section.
- B. Only material which is to be introduced as evidence at trial shall be forwarded for laboratory analysis.
  - 1. Material Seized for Evidence and Transported to the Lab by the Property and Evidence Section
    - a. After properly packaging the material and entering it into the Evidence Module, the officer shall complete the Request for

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Laboratory Examination form (DFS100-F100) as indicated in Section III, Chapter 24 of the Report Writing Manual.

- b. During the scheduled weekly collection, property technicians will check the evidence for proper packaging and completion of the Request for Laboratory Examination (RFLE). The technicians will not collect any narcotics with packaging or RFLE form errors. The technicians shall identify any issues to the station/division property supervisor. The material will be left in the temporary property collection point for the officer to correct.
- c. Properly packaged materials will be collected and submitted to the lab by employees of the Property and Evidence Section on a weekly basis, in accordance with the section's internal operating procedures.
- 2. Material Seized for Evidence and Transported to the Lab by the Case Officer
  - a. Depending on the type of case and/or evidence involved, detectives and sometimes patrol officers may elect to hand carry evidence to the lab. Patrol officers may do so only with supervisory approval.
  - b. Material that is hand carried shall be placed inside a Department approved clear plastic bag, or if too large, packaged suitably in a Department approved evidence packaging box. Officers shall complete the outside of the clear plastic bag or box. The bag shall be completely sealed, and items such as bongs shall have all holes closed with tape. Freshly cut or living plants shall be thoroughly dried prior to storage in the Department approved clear plastic bag or box, unless seized or found in such bag. If doubt exists concerning packaging requirements for materials, contact an available drug chemist at the Northern Virginia Forensic Laboratory, 703-334-9755, or review the online packaging manual at www.dfs.virginia.gov.



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- c. The officer shall package the material in accordance with all departmental policies, procedures, and evidence packaging guidelines. An RFLE form shall be completed.
- d. The officer shall bring all evidence that they intend to hand carry to the lab to the Property and Evidence Section first. The chain of custody record can only be updated once it is received by the Property and Evidence Section.
- e. The officer shall then transport the material to the Northern Virginia Forensic Laboratory, 10850 Pyramid Place, Manassas, Virginia. The lab receives material Monday through Friday between 0815 hours and 1700 hours. The officer shall submit the RFLE form at the lab's evidence receiving desk and retain a copy for the case record.
- f. Following analysis, the seizing officer shall receive by mail, three copies of a Certificate of Analysis. The officer shall file a copy of the Certificate of Analysis no less than 7 days prior to the assigned court date.
- g. A property technician will transport evidence from the lab back to the Property Section during a regularly scheduled pickup.
- h. When material is no longer required as evidence for court, the officer shall notify the Property Section and ensure that the status is changed from EVIDENCE to DESTROY. The Property Section personnel shall receive the material and obtain court authorization for destruction.
- C. Material that is not evidence and therefore does not require laboratory analysis shall be handled as follows:
  - 1. The reporting officer shall package the material in a Department approved clear plastic bag or a box, complete the information on the exterior portion, and clearly mark the package with the word DESTROY.



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- 2. The material shall be entered into the Evidence Module with the status of DESTROY, and the barcode label displaying this status shall be affixed to the exterior of the package.
- The packaged material shall be placed in the narcotics storage of the temporary property collection point. The property technician shall collect the material during the weekly pickup and process the item for destruction.
- D. Upon receipt of any prescription medications that are held in police custody as found property or for temporary safeguarding, a reasonable effort should be made to visually inspect the container to ensure that the contents correspond to the prescription and that illicit substances are not present. A Physician's Desk Reference (PDR) is useful in identifying prescription medications by appearance. Prescription medications may be released under the following conditions:
  - 1. Releasable medications must be packaged in the original pharmacy-issued contained, including the prescription label identifying the pharmacy, patient, medication, dosage, date prescribed, and prescribing doctor.
  - 2. The material is to be released only to the adult patient prescribed the medication, and only upon satisfactory proof of identification with valid photo ID. The claimant, if other than the patient, may receive the material only legal custody or guardianship of the patient (i.e., child or other family member) can be established.
- E. Narcotics, marijuana, and paraphernalia collected and submitted in quantities that constitute a misdemeanor shall be stored by the Property Section for one year to allow the investigating officer to initiate prosecution of the case. The investigating officer is responsible for notifying the Property Section and updating the evidence record to indicate the item(s) need to be retained for a longer period of time. Lacking any notification, the status of the item(s) will be changed to FOR DESTRUCTION by the narcotics processing officer and destroyed during the next scheduled drug disposal.

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F. A detective from the Internal Affairs Bureau shall accompany Property and Evidence staff during the quarterly narcotics burns to audit the process and ensure compliance with all legal requirements and business practices.

### VII. RESPONSIBILITIES OF SUBMITTING PERSONNEL

- A. All property which is seized or comes into the possession of Department personnel shall be properly packaged in accordance with established procedures provided in the FCPD Evidence Packaging Guide. An incident report shall be completed describing the circumstances under which the property came into police possession.
  - All potentially dangerous articles shall be rendered safe. Firearms shall be unloaded and secured in an approved weapons box. The exterior of the box shall be marked "SAFE". Open-bladed knives will have exposed edges covered. Handguns shall be placed in the approved storage location within the temporary property collection point.
  - 2. Narcotics and related paraphernalia shall be packaged separately. Narcotics shall be placed in the approved storage location within the temporary property collection point.
  - 3. Large items not suitable for packing in containers will be appropriately identified with a bar code label on a securely attached bulk item tag.
  - 4. Property opened for any reason must be resealed before submission to the Property Section for safekeeping.
- B. All currency or negotiable items coming into the control of Department personnel will be packaged and sealed as an individual item in a translucent Department currency bag. This includes currency removed from arrested persons. If the currency is such an amount that it will not fit into a currency bag, then it may be packaged in a box.



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- The separate and sealed individual package of currency will list the exact contents, including the breakdown of denominations (bills and coins), and the grand total of the currency. This information will be recorded on the exterior of the currency bag or box. The currency package shall be signed by the counting officer and a verifying officer.
- 2. A verified counting procedure has been established to accurately record all currency and to eliminate the possibility of a miscount. The following procedure will be utilized for all currency which is in the control of the Department for any reason:
  - (a) At the first reasonable opportunity, the employee responsible for the custody of the currency shall count the currency by separating it into each denomination of bills and coins.
  - (b) The total amount of each denomination should be added to determine a grand total.
  - (c) The currency will also be counted in the same manner by another sworn employee, preferably a supervisor. The second officer or supervisor shall be documented as a part of the case or property record.
  - (d) After confirming the amount, the money will be placed in a separate sealed currency bag or box and the exact currency count recorded on the exterior of the currency bag or box. The appropriate barcode label will be placed at the top of the currency bag or box.
  - (e) All currency shall be placed in the approved storage location within the temporary property collection point.
- C. Prior to the end of the collecting officer's shift, all property will be entered into the Evidence Module. Each item or group of like items will be sequentially numbered when entering property into the module. The barcode shall be attached to the exterior of the package of each item or group of like items. In limited situations when an employee cannot enter the property into I/LEADS by the end of the shift, the property will be

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secured in the temporary property collection point. Officers shall include their name and case number, and complete the Temporary Log for Immediate Entry. Supervisory approval is needed for any items not entered into I/LEADS prior to the end of the shift. Property shall be processed immediately upon return to work.

- D. All personnel shall place all property into an authorized temporary property collection point after entering it in the Evidence Module. Exceptions to this include large quantities of recovered or seized property, or large, bulky items that may not fit into the temporary collection point, and should be transported immediately to the primary Property and Evidence Section. The Property and Evidence Section has a limited, after-hours drop-off location outside the police entrance to the section. Officers who need to secure property after hours shall place the evidence inside the locker and secure it with the provided padlock. Property technicians inspect the lockers Monday through Friday during business hours and will process any items secured inside. Property shall not be stored in any vehicle, desk, personal locker or any other unauthorized location.
- E. If circumstances occur outside of the regular operating hours of the Property and Evidence Section and the drop-off location cannot accommodate the size or quantity of the property, arrangements for transport and/or storage shall be made by contacting the police liaison commander (PLC), who will coordinate with the Resource Management Bureau.
- F. Any officer who intends to hand carry any evidence directly to the Northern Virginia Forensics Laboratory for analysis shall first take it to the Property and Evidence Section so the chain of custody record may be updated.
- G. Officers may elect to hold certain property at the station for release to the owner. Such property shall be marked and dated as "Hold for Release to the Owner". However, if the owner has not collected the property from the station within 72 hours of notification, the property will be transported during the next scheduled weekly pickup.
- H. Any property that is released to the owner directly from the station must be completed in accordance with Section II, Chapter 3 of the Department's Report Writing Manual. Deviation from requirements in this subsection

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must be approved by a command staff officer. Property releases shall be recorded in I/LEADS prior to the end of the releasing officer's shift.

- 1. Firearms may be released at the Property Section or the respective district station or division. Prior to releasing the firearm, the police citizen aide (PCA) or other VCIN Level B operator shall complete an NCIC/VCIN criminal background check, using purpose code "F" on the person attempting to pick up the firearm. The results of the background check shall be recorded on the Firearm Release Verification form (PD210). This form shall be forwarded to the Property Room following the release of the firearm(s) or the refusal to release the firearm to the owner.
  - 2. Civilian employees may request a sworn officer to assist with the release of firearms at the station to ensure the firearm has been made safe.
- I. Officers who have been designated by the Department as supplemental crime scene technicians or detectives assigned to CIS may temporarily retain evidence at a station beyond the weekly collection period with the intent of further processing or retrieving additional information from the evidence (i.e., determining ownership). The collecting officer shall enter the retained item(s) into the Evidence Module and complete the Crime Scene Request template in the Supplement section of the I/LEADS Incident Module. A link shall be sent from this supplement to the Role for Crime Scene in order to ensure processing and analysis. The item(s) shall be stored in the blue supplemental crime scene lockers designated for evidence that requires processing When processing has been completed, the processing officer/CIS detective will place the item(s) in the appropriate storage location within the temporary property collection point, at which time it will be transported through normal means.
  - 1. Evidence retained for this purpose shall not be held at the station more than 30 days beyond its date of collection.
  - 2. If there is not any space available in the blue slam lockers to hold property for processing, the item(s) shall be sent to the Property Section during the next weekly collection and held until supplemental crime scene is able to retrieve and process it.



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- J. Officers recovering bicycles shall ask finders of such bicycles if they are interested in claiming the bicycle in the event the owner cannot be identified. If so, officers are to note the finder's name and daytime telephone number in the. Evidence Module. The Property Section will contact the finder and arrange for release and pickup of the bicycle. Officers are not to advise finders to contact the Property Section.
- K. Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles (VDMV) temporary and permanent license plates shall be placed in the temporary property collection point or delivered directly to the Property Section. Each license plate shall have a barcode label attached.
  - 1. License plates that are not needed as evidence will be marked as "release to owner," VDMV. These license plates will be transported to the VDMV by an employee of the Property and Evidence Section.
  - 2. All VDMV license plates and operators' licenses that are needed for court are handled as evidence and shall be processed as any other evidence pursuant to Section III of this Order.
  - 3. Out of state license plates and operator's licenses that come into possession of Department personnel shall be treated as any other property pursuant to Section V of this Order. VDMV does not accept these items.
- L. VDMV operators' licenses seized for suspension or revocation shall have the appropriate VDMV suspension/revocation notice attached in lieu of completing a bar code label. Station/division commanders shall utilize one of the following methods in handling this type of VDMV property:
  - 1. The licenses may be placed in a separate tray that is checked on a daily basis and the licenses transported within the required 24 hours.
  - 2. The licenses may be mailed directly to VDMV headquarters.
- M. It is the responsibility of the current case officer to notify the Property Section when the disposition of property changes. This includes changes

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from EVIDENCE to RELEASE TO OWNER or OWNER UNKNOWN, DISPOSE OF IN ACCORDANCE WITH LAW. When a case has been assigned to a detective, it is that detective's responsibility to update the case officer information in the records management system.

- N. Employees submitting property which may be claimed shall make a determined effort to locate the rightful owners of any property without known ownership. This includes conducting an NCIC check when appropriate. Employees shall inform finders that should the rightful owner be located after property was released to them, the owner may take action to reclaim the property in the possession of the finder.
  - 1. An Owner Notification Letter shall be sent by the Property Section to the owner/finder of all releasable property, once the property disposition is changed to releasable.

### VIII. RESPONSIBILITIES OF DIVISION/STATION SUPERVISORS

- A. Each division and station commander having an authorized temporary collection point will designate one supervisor at the rank of sergeant or second lieutenant to oversee the temporary property collection point. This temporary property supervisor will be responsible for conducting a complete inventory of the property collection point weekly, and conducting inspections. This temporary property supervisor will also be the primary point of contact with the Property Section regarding all property matters at their division/station.
  - 1. The weekly inspection shall include a shelf-to-record inventory, which requires the temporary property supervisor to print a complete list of property currently assigned to the station's temporary property collection point. The temporary property supervisor shall then compare what is on hand to what is on the list. The supervisor shall complete the Weekly Property Inspection Summary, noting items not accounted for, items not entered into I/LEADS, etc. All discrepancies shall be researched, verified, and corrected, as appropriate. The results of the inventory and corrective actions shall be forwarded to the appropriate supervisor and commander for review and action, as necessary.

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- 2. Inspections may be done as needed and at the discretion of the station commander. The temporary property supervisor may review items for proper packaging and labeling; proper storage of sensitive items and items held for processing; reoccurring exceptions that may require training; and security and access control.
- 3. Station or bureau commanders may conduct an inspection or audit of the temporary property collection point(s) at any time.
- 4. Supervisors are responsible for initiating administrative disposals in accordance with Section X of this General Order, when an item cannot be located at the temporary property collection point, and there is no indication that the item was transported to the primary Property and Evidence Section.
- B. The station commander shall ensure that a supervisor is available to accompany the property and evidence technicians during the weekly scheduled property collection. This supervisor shall ensure that any issues identified during the collection period (e.g., incomplete or inappropriate packaging) are communicated to the appropriate station personnel and/or command staff.
- C. Any issues identified during the weekly collection must be corrected by the next scheduled collection. Issues identified during consecutive weekly collections shall be referred by the station property supervisor to the station commander. If an opportunity for training is identified, the station commander shall coordinate with the commander of the Resource Management Bureau to determine an appropriate solution.

### IX. RESPONSIBILITIES OF PROPERTY SECTION PERSONNEL

- A. The Property Section will maintain a sufficient supply of materials for sealing and resealing containers presented for storage.
- B. Evidence technicians will regularly collect evidence from the temporary property collection points on a weekly basis, in accordance with the schedule established by the Property Section supervisor. If a location

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experiences a high volume of evidence, a supervisor may request an additional pick-up by the Property Section.

- C. Evidence technicians will not accept any property which is not appropriately packaged according to established guidelines.
  - The Property and Evidence Section supervisor will accompany the evidence technicians at least once a quarter and conduct an unannounced inspection of each station's temporary property collection point. Results will be communicated in writing to the respective station/division commanders.
  - 2. The Property and Evidence section supervisor shall conduct a quarterly inspection of adherence to procedures used for the control and accountability of property. This may include, but is not limited to the inspection of security and access control and internal processes and procedures followed by the evidence technicians.
  - 3. The Property Section supervisor will be responsible for finalizing all administrative disposals, conducted in accordance with Section X of this General Order.

# X. <u>ADMINISTRATIVE DISPOSAL</u>

- A. Administrative disposals do not relieve the affected employee or supervisor of any responsibility to exhaust all investigative steps to locate an item, nor do they substitute for an administrative investigation. In the event of cases involving firearms, currency, or narcotics, an administrative disposal shall not occur until an administrative review has been completed.
  - 1. When an item cannot be found during an inventory, officers and/or supervisors shall follow these procedures:
    - a. Review all pertinent case documents, including incident reports, supplements, property records, and/or vouchers for any scanned documents or notes that indicate the location of an item.

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- b. Follow up with the listed owner to ensure the item was not released back to them.
- c. Consult with the Property and Evidence Section for additional investigative steps, or audit information.
- 2. If these steps do not reveal the status of the item, an administrative disposal memo shall be routed through the officer's assigned station/division commander to the Director, Logistics and Property Division, Resource Management Bureau.
- 3. A copy of this memo will be routed to the Property and Evidence Section supervisor to complete the final disposition. Any voucher associated with the property will be reviewed and deleted if all of the items on the voucher can be accounted for. The supervisor or a designee will utilize Quick Update and use the code DISPOSITION and add notes in the disposition record indicating administrative disposal. The memo will be retained in the Section supervisor's office files for a minimum of three years.
- B. The Internal Affairs Bureau Inspections Division may inspect records of administrative disposals at any time. The Inspections Division is also responsible for other inspections related to property and evidence, as defined in General Order 320.1, Section V.

### XI. <u>LEGAL REFERENCES</u>

Code of the County of Fairfax, Virginia, Section 2-2-1 Code of the County of Fairfax, Virginia, Section 2-2-4

### XII. ACCREDITATION STANDARDS REFERENCE

### <u>VLEPSC</u> ADM. 16.01 16.04 16.02 16.03

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This General Order becomes effective April 1, 2013, and rescinds all previous rules and regulations pertaining to this subject.

ISSUED BY:

Chief of Police

APPROVED BY: