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Standard Guide for Physical Evidence Labeling and Related Documentation¹

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1. Scope

1.1 This guide describes methods to be used for labeling physical evidence collected during field investigations; received in a forensic laboratory; or isolated, generated, or prepared from items submitted for laboratory examination.

1.2 Many types of physical evidence may be hazardous. It is assumed that personnel assigned to the collection, packaging, storing, or analysis of physical evidence will take precautions as appropriate to the evidence.

1.3 This guide offers a set of instructions for performing one or more specific operations. *This standard cannot replace knowledge, skill, or ability acquired through appropriate education, training, and experience and should be used in conjunction with sound professional judgment.*

1.4 *This standard does not purport to address all of the safety concerns, if any, associated with its use. It is the responsibility of the user of this standard to establish appropriate safety, health, and environmental practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use.*

1.5 *This international standard was developed in accordance with internationally recognized principles on standardization established in the Decision on Principles for the Development of International Standards, Guides and Recommendations issued by the World Trade Organization Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Committee.*

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 *ASTM Standards:*²

E1188 Practice for Collection and Preservation of Information and Physical Items by a Technical Investigator

E1492 Practice for Receiving, Documenting, Storing, and Retrieving Evidence in a Forensic Science Laboratory

¹ This guide is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee E30 on Forensic Sciences and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee E30.11 on Interdisciplinary Forensic Science Standards.

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² For referenced ASTM standards, visit the ASTM website, www.astm.org, or contact ASTM Customer Service at service@astm.org. For *Annual Book of ASTM Standards* volume information, refer to the standard's Document Summary page on the ASTM website.

3. Summary of Practice

3.1 Any individual item of evidence is marked with a numeric or alphanumeric designation that is unique and allows the origin of the item to be unequivocally established.

4. Significance and Use

4.1 By following the procedures specified in this guide, any item of physical evidence will have a traceable audit trail by which the origin, past history, treatment, and analysis of the item can be determined.

4.2 By following these procedures, the chain of custody of any item of physical evidence will be maintained and documented.

5. Marking Evidence Upon Original Collection

5.1 General Requirements:

5.1.1 See Practice E1188 for the collection and preservation of items. Each item of evidence will be assigned a unique numeric or alphanumeric designator by the investigator who collects the evidence, or by someone designated to assign item numbers. The system used should ensure that items cannot be confused physically, and cannot be confused when referred to in records or other documents.

5.1.1.1 Similar evidence items may be collected as a group and assigned a single designator (for example, remains of fireworks paper collected within Sampling Quadrant 3, metal shavings from under lathe, pieces of broken glass from around northwest kitchen window, droplets of metal from area of origin). Follow the guidelines in Section 6 if any portion of the item is isolated from the remainder of the group (like for inspection, spot testing, or chemical analysis).

5.1.2 Whenever possible, sequential identifiers will be used for evidence associated with a particular incident, event, or scene.

5.1.3 The location and condition of each item should be documented prior to collection.

5.1.4 Each item should be properly protected in an appropriate manner.

5.1.5 Each item or its proximal container shall be marked or tagged with the following information:

5.1.5.1 Item number,

5.1.5.2 Case or incident number,

5.1.5.3 Identification of person who collected item,