

# COLUMBUS POLICE DEPARTMENT



## General Order 84: Property and Evidence Control

CALEA Standards: 84.1.1  
84.1.2  
84.1.3  
84.1.4  
84.1.5  
84.1.6

Replaces: General Order 84 effective December 19, 2017  
SOP 2016-06

Effective date: May 8, 2019

### Chapter Contents:

- 84.1 Administration and Operation
  - 84.1.1 Evidence/Property Control System
  - 84.1.2 Storage and Security
  - 84.1.3 Temporary Security
  - 84.1.4 Security of Controlled Substances and Weapons for Training
  - 84.1.5 Records, Status of Property
  - 84.1.6 Inspections and Reports

## 84.1 Administration and Operation

### 84.1.1 Evidence/Property Control System

The department's procedures for receiving control of all property obtained by officers include:

- A. All property must be entered into the department's computerized record system before the officer ends his/her shift, except when the officer receives supervisory approval to delay entering the property into the computer system and the officer verbally informs the supervisor of the items not being entered.
- B. All property to be placed in the property room will be secured in property room temporary storage before the officer ends his/her shift, except when the officer receives supervisory approval to delay securing property in temporary storage and the officer verbally informs the supervisor of the items not being secured.
  1. A detective may temporarily store property in:
    - a. A temporary locker assigned to and accessible only by that detective;
    - b. The detective laboratory room if only accessible by that detective; or
    - c. In the narcotic's vault or safe where accessibility is limited only to narcotics detectives.
  2. If a detective temporarily stores property, he/she shall document the chain of custody by noting the date(s), time(s), and location(s) the property was entered and removed. Detectives who temporarily store property as authorized by G.O. 84.1.1(B)(1) shall ensure that within 45 days, any such property is either released to the owner in accordance with G.O. 84.1.1(F)(2), or secured in property room temporary storage. However, any controlled substances shall be secured in property room temporary storage within 24 hours. Any exception to these time limitations require approval by the Chief of Police or his/her designee.
- C. A report is required any time that property is taken into custody by the department. In addition, an electronic property voucher shall be completed for all items of property that are placed in property room temporary storage for each incident. Each item of property will be individually described, and the chain of custody of each item will be documented, which will include the location and/or person the property was seized from, along with the date and time of the seizure. Chain of custody includes when an officer temporarily secures an item according to this General Order and later retrieves it from where it was secured.
- D. Packaging and labeling guidelines:

1. Packaging – All property entered into the property room shall be secured in evidence packaging or have an evidence tag attached to it. The officer entering the property shall initial the seal on any evidence packaging.
  2. Labeling – All information on the property tag or packaging is to be filled out to include the:
    - a. Case number,
    - b. Package number, and
    - c. Description of item.
  3. Special Procedures for Counterfeit Currency – Counterfeit bill(s) shall be:
    - a. Copied, the incident number written on the copy, and submitted with normal shift paperwork;
    - b. Place the counterfeit bill(s) into evidence;
    - c. The property field should be completed by putting:
      - i. “Counterfeit Money” in the description tab;
      - ii. “Evidence” in the status tab;
      - iii. The serial number in the serial number tab;
      - iv. The denomination in the value tab;
      - v. The quantity should be the total number of bills collected that have both:
        - a. The same serial number; and
        - b. Denomination
      - vi. Bills with either different serial numbers or of different denominations require their own property entry.
      - vii. The bills can all be packaged together but need to be listed as separate items.
- E. Money, precious metals, jewelry, firearms and drugs will have extra security measures for handling as provided in General Order 84.1.2(B)(1).

F. Release of property items from the control of the property and evidence function:

1. Temporary release – Evidentiary items to be released temporarily for the purpose of laboratory testing, courtroom testimony or any other criminal justice function shall be signed out by the officer in custody of the item and the chain of custody shall be documented to show the exchange. Following the need for the item to be out of the control of the property and evidence function, the item is to be returned to the property room and placed back in the property room. The chain of custody shall be documented to show that the item is returned to the property room. Temporary releases of evidentiary items for laboratory testing shall only be permitted to be done by a person with authorized access in accordance with G.O. 84.1.2(D).

- a. Temporary releases of evidentiary items for courtroom testimony:

- i. Officers shall provide a person with authorized access in accordance with G.O. 84.1.2(D):

- a. A subpoena for the case; and

- b. Documentation confirming the use of the evidence at the conclusion of the court proceeding, which shall include a signature from the prosecutor involved. If the court retains the evidence, this shall be indicated on the documentation.

- ii. It is the responsibility of a person with authorized access in accordance with G.O. 84.1.2(D) to ensure that these records are maintained with the other related control records for the property.

- b. Controlled substances shall not be temporarily released for any other criminal justice function without prior approval by the Chief of Police or his/her designee.

2. Final release

- a. All items of property seized as a result of an arrest, search warrant, or warrantless search may be disposed of in accordance with IC 35-33-5-5.

- i. If criminal charges are not filed within the period of limitation as outlined in IC 35-41-4-2, the disposition of the cause shall be considered final.

- ii. Firearms not seized in accordance with 35-33-5-5(c)(3) may be disposed of in accordance with IC 35-47-3. Firearms belonging to a person who cannot legally possess the firearm under state or federal law will be retained until the owner can legally possess it unless otherwise ordered by a court.
- b. All items of property taken into custody for reasons other than arrest, search warrant, or a warrantless search should be disposed of in the following manner:
  - i. If it is illegal to possess the item it may be disposed by destruction, unless the item is a firearm.
    - a. Firearms belonging to a person who cannot legally possess the firearm under state or federal law will be retained until the owner can legally possess it unless otherwise ordered by a court.
    - b. Before an item is disposed by destruction, a photograph demonstrating the nature of the property must be obtained and electronically stored, and the destruction shall be witnessed by two (2) people.
  - ii. If it is not illegal to possess the item, there will be a reasonable attempt to identify the owner. If an owner is identified, documented reasonable attempts will be made to contact the owner and return the property. If the owner cannot be identified, or reasonable attempts to make contact with the owner to return the property are unsuccessful, a photograph demonstrating the nature of the property must be obtained and electronically stored, and the property may be disposed of in the following manner:
    - a. Money is subject to custody of the State of Indiana as unclaimed property (IC 32-34-1-21). Once the property is held for the amount of time prescribed by IC 32-34-1-20(c)(7), the property should be disposed of in accordance with IC 32-34-1-26.
    - b. Tangible items other than money may be disposed of in accordance with 5-22-22.
    - c. If an item is worthless property, as defined by IC 5-22-22-8, it may demolished or junked after ninety (90) days.

- c. Any item of property released to its owner after being placed in temporary storage or in the property room shall be signed for by the person to whom the property was released on a Property Release Receipt. The releasing officer shall make positive identification as to the person claiming to be the owner/guardian. The receipt shall be maintained with the paper case file and electronically scanned into the electronic case file.
- G. Internal control procedures are established in General Order 84.1.6. In addition, a supervisor will be assigned to oversee the Property Room Manager and the overall operations of the property room.

#### 84.1.2 Storage and Security

- A. Temporary storage containers and areas will be made available in accordance with General Order 84.1.3 so that officers can comply with General Order 84.1.1(B). The use of any temporary storage containers and areas maintained by the property room are restricted to in-custody property and evidence.
- B. All in-custody and evidentiary property received by the property room will be stored within the department's property room or large item property room. The property room will serve as the main storage area for property and evidence, and the large item property room will serve as the storage area for property and evidence too large to maintain in the property room or property that is hazardous to maintain in the property room.
  - 1. Money, precious metals, jewelry, firearms and drugs maintained in the property room or the large item property room, shall be stored in a manner that requires the opening of a lock after entering through the secured property room or large item property room; this extra security may be met by utilizing locked lockers or locked interior rooms within the property room and large item property room. These secondary locks shall be locked at all times when an authorized person is not in the property room or large item property room.
  - 2. Explosives will not be stored in the property room or large item property room. See General Order 84.1.4(B) for storage instructions.
  - 3. Firearms that are placed into the property room shall be sent to the lab for NIBIN/IBIS test firing if:
    - a. The firearm was confiscated for a firearm-related offense, or;
    - b. Considered found property.

- C. A person authorized to enter the property room will retrieve the property from the property room temporary storage areas and store the item in the property room or large item property room.
- D. Entry to the property room and the large item property room is restricted to the Property Room Manager and any other person designated by the Chief of Police in order to assist the Property Room Manager or to do the Property Room Manager's job when he/she is unavailable.
  - 1. Entry doors to the property room and large item property room will be set to limit access to those authorized to enter the rooms. These entry doors shall be locked at all times when an authorized person is not in the room.
  - 2. Other persons not authorized by G.O. 84.1.2(D) may enter the property room and large item property room, provided they are accompanied by a person authorized to enter the rooms. Any person not authorized by G.O. 84.1.2(D) entering the property room or the large item property room shall sign in when they enter the room and sign out when they exit the room, and indicate their reason for entrance into the room. This does not affect an officer's access to temporary storage containers located near the property room or large item property room.
  - 3. Any person not authorized by G.O. 84.1.2(D) that enters the property room or large item property room shall be accompanied at all times by a person with authorized access in accordance with G.O. 84.1.2(D).

#### 84.1.3 Temporary Security

- A. Property room temporary storage containers and areas are provided outside of the property room and the large item property room for temporary storage of property. When an officer places property in these containers and areas in order to comply with General Order 84.1.1(B), he/she shall lock the temporary storage container or area after placing the property in the container or area.
- B. In lieu of utilizing a property room temporary storage container, Detectives and Narcotics Detectives may temporarily store items in accordance with General 84.1.1(B).

#### 84.1.4 Security of Controlled Substances and Weapons for Training

- A. At no time will controlled substances or weapons be used for training and/or educational purposes.

- B. The department has officers who are certified as Federal Explosive Technicians. Any explosives used for investigative or training purposes shall be maintained by these certified officers, and shall be accounted for and stored in accordance with the Federal Explosives Law and Regulations established by the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. These regulations include any appropriate hazmat placards/warning signage depending on the type and quantity of the materials.

#### 84.1.5 Records, Status of Property

The Property Room Manager is responsible for ensuring that the property room records system accurately reflects the location of all property, the date and time when each item of property was received or released by the property room, the description of each item of property, the chain of custody from the time each item of property was stored until its final disposition, and the amount of property on hand.

#### 84.1.6 Inspections and Reports

In order to maintain a high degree of evidentiary integrity over agency controlled property and evidence, the following documented inspections, inventory, and audits shall be completed:

- i. An inspection to determine adherence to procedures used for the control of property will be conducted at least semi-annually each year by the Administrative Captain or his/her designee. The inspector must complete a report documenting the following:
  - 1. Whether the property rooms are being maintained in a clean and orderly fashion;
  - 2. Whether the integrity of the property is being maintained;
  - 3. Whether relevant department directives concerning management of the property room are being followed;
  - 4. Whether the property is being protected from damage or deterioration;
  - 5. Whether proper accountability procedures are being maintained;
  - 6. Whether property having no further evidentiary value is being disposed of;  
and
  - 7. Whether the temporary evidentiary items checked out for training or educational purposes are being returned in accordance with this General Order.




- ii. An audit of the property in the property room will take place whenever the Property Room Manager is assigned to and/or transferred from the position holding authority for the day-to-day supervision and operation of the property and evidence function. The audit shall be conducted jointly by the newly designated property and evidence custodian and a designee of the Chief of Police. This audit shall include at least a sampling of the total amount of high risk property, as identified in General Order 84.1.1(E), records under the department's care as it relates to documentation and accountability. If an error rate exceeds four percent (4%), a full inventory of high-risk items is required. The auditors must complete a report, and submit it to the Chief of Police.
- iii. An annual audit of the property and evidence held by the department shall be conducted by the Uniform Captain or another supervisor not routinely or directly connected with the control of the property room as assigned by the Chief of Police. The purpose of this audit is not to require the accounting of every single item of property. The audit should be sufficient to ensure the integrity of the system and accountability of property; it should be a significant representative sampling of property, including high risk items as identified in General Order 84.1.1(E). The auditor must complete a report, and submit it to the Chief of Police.
- iv. Unannounced inspections of property storage areas are conducted by the Deputy Chief, or as otherwise directed by the Chief of Police, at least once a year. This inspection is not meant to be a time consuming task. The inspector must complete a report documenting the following:
  - 1. Inspection of the property and evidence areas for cleanliness;
  - 2. Inspection of the property and evidence areas for orderliness;
  - 3. Inspecting and tracing a few pieces of property and evidence to assure they are in the proper place as stated in the property room records; and
  - 4. Inspection of the temporary evidentiary items checked out in accordance with this General Order.


Acceptance by Columbus Police Department Captain's Board:

Date: 5-8-2019

  
Jonathan L. Rohde, Chief

Attest:

  
Kathy Rondonanski, Chief's Secretary

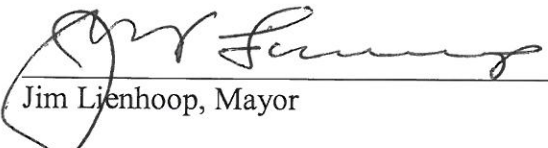
  
Michael Richardson, Deputy Chief

  
Steve Norman, Uniform Captain


  
Brian Wilder, Administrative Captain

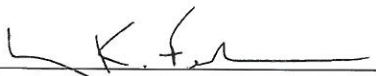
Acceptance by Columbus Board of Public Works and Safety:

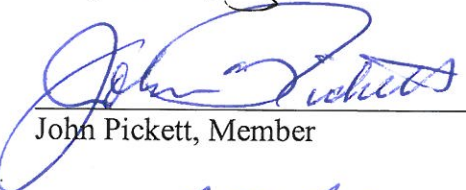
Date: May 8, 2019

  
Jim Lienhoop, Mayor

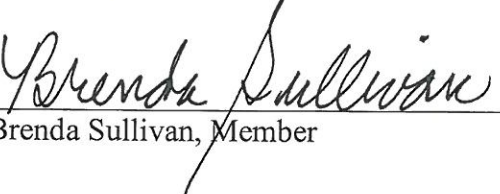
Attest:

  
Luann Welmer, Clerk-Treasurer

  
Mary Ferdon, Member

  
John Pickett, Member

  
Jim Strietelmeier, Member

  
Brenda Sullivan, Member