



**SPRINGFIELD TOWNSHIP POLICE DEPARTMENT**  
**Wyndmoor, Pennsylvania**

**Policy 2-10**

**Policy Title:** Property and Evidence Control

**Date of Issue:** December 1, 2022

**Rescinds:** None

**By Authority of:**

**Chief of Police**

**I. Purpose**

The purpose of this order is to establish administrative and operational guidelines for property and evidence control by personnel of the Springfield Township Police Department.

**II. Policy**

It is the policy of the Springfield Township Police Department that all property coming under the control of this department be preserved, documented, stored, and accounted for to preserve the integrity and evidentiary value of evidence and to safeguard property. It is also the policy of this department to make reasonable efforts to identify and notify the owner or custodian of recovered property.

**III. Receipt of Property by Department Personnel**

A. All property received by any member of this department shall be properly documented, safeguarded, and secured by the officer receiving the property as soon as possible.

1. The types of property to be protected are:

- a. Evidence
- b. Recovered Property
- c. Found Property
- d. Abandoned Property
- e. Safekeeping / Property acquired by the civil process function

2. When employees of this department come into control of another person's property, they shall ensure that the property is safeguarded. This includes the release of the property to a party approved by the property owner, or by securing it in accordance with department policy. If applicable, a person's vehicle shall also be secured by closing and locking the doors and windows before it is left unattended. If this is not possible, the officer should consider towing the vehicle.
- B. It shall be the responsibility of any employee receiving any of the above categories of property to ensure that the property is clearly marked, identified, properly packaged, and stored within one of the temporary evidence areas prior to the conclusion of the employee's shift and according to the provisions of this policy.
1. For property which is lost, abandoned, or held for safekeeping, and can be released back to the proper owner (or their designee) prior to the end of the responsible employee's shift, the employee shall:
    - a. Ensure the property is packaged in accordance with department policy.
    - b. Complete the Property Claim Receipt form (Attachment C) is properly completed.
    - c. Ensure both they and the claimant sign the Property Claim Receipt, at the time when the property is released.
    - d. Attach the Property Claim Receipt to the incident report.
  2. All other property, or lost, abandoned, or property held for safekeeping, which cannot be released prior to the conclusion of the employee's shift shall be handled as follows. The receiving employee shall:
    - a. Enter the property into the electronic evidence / property control system by completing the relevant blocks and entering the required information.
    - b. Mark the property, and / or its package with an evidence sticker from the electronic evidence / property control system.
    - c. Place and secure the property by locking it in the temporary storage lockers provided in the evidence processing room. A locked refrigerator is located in the evidence processing room to preserve items requiring refrigeration.
    - d. Properly document, store, and enter the property into the electronic evidence / property control system prior to the conclusion of the employee's shift unless approved by a shift supervisor.
- C. All property received by this department shall have a completed incident report submitted. This report will include:
1. Details of the circumstance under which the property came into this department's control.

2. Description of the items of property obtained.
  3. Information regarding ownership and / or the finder of the property.
- D. All evidence and valuable property should be packaged / prepared and labeled in accordance with the procedures of the Pennsylvania State Police Crime Laboratory. All cash shall be counted, verified, and documented by two employees, if available.
- E. All property small enough shall be packaged in paper bags or other appropriate containers which are stored in the evidence processing room (e.g. gun boxes, cans, etc.). In addition to the required evidence sticker:
1. All property should be marked highlighting a warning for any associated hazards (e.g. glass, sharp sides, etc.).
  2. Perishable food items should not be seized and packaged. Property should also be inspected for any visible signs of infestation and not seized if evidence thereof is discovered. Any perishable food items or confirmed infested pieces of property not seized, should be documented in a report and the evidence custodian advised of their existence via email.
  3. Officers should consult with the evidence custodian should perishables or infested pieces of property need to be seized as evidence.
- F. Property not small enough to be packaged in bags or containers shall be individually tagged as a separate item.
- G. Most property, after being properly packaged and identified, shall be placed and locked inside one of the temporary evidence lockers.
- H. Large, cumbersome, flammable, and caustic items shall, after being tagged, be secured in the metal lockers housed inside the prisoner intake garage. These items will then be removed by the evidence custodian and moved to the permanent storage side of the same shed named above. This same procedure will be used for seized bicycles.
- I. Perishable human body items, such as blood or urine, shall be placed in the secure refrigerator. Usage of this refrigerator shall be restricted to in-custody property and evidence.
- J. When items that are too large to be secured in any of the department's evidence storage rooms are received, the evidence custodian or the Chief of Police will be consulted for a determination of disposition.
- K. The officer taking control of the property shall make an immediate attempt to determine the owner and notify them of any recovery. The report should remain open until several attempts are made. These efforts shall be documented in the narrative of the report. These efforts may include, but are not limited to:

1. CLEAN / NCIC search.
2. Search of the department's record management system.

#### **IV. Release of Property**

- A. Release of property to owners, finders, or for other investigative functions, from evidence control shall be accomplished by making contact with the evidence custodian. In the case of release of property for court purposes, the requesting officer shall make prior arrangements forty-eight (48) hours in advance when possible. When making arrangements with citizens to come in to the station they should be advised to contact the evidence custodian in advance, in the event that the custodian may not be available.
- B. Procedures for property release or transfer:
  1. Property shall only be released from the property rooms by the evidence custodian or other authorized personnel.
  2. Property from other than the property room can be released or transferred using the property release form within the police records management system.
  3. If the property is being released to a finder, a property release form within the police records management system will be used.
  4. Officers releasing property shall supplement the incident report with their actions.

#### **V. Evidence Storage Facilities**

- A. Evidence storage rooms are the property and evidence storage areas within the police station. They include the primary evidence room, the prisoner intake garage, and an exterior storage shed.
- B. These areas shall be controlled by limited key access, with the exception of shed, which can be secured using a padlock controlled solely by the evidence custodian.
- C. Access to these areas is limited to those persons authorized by the Chief of Police.
- D. In the event that items are taken into the department's control that cannot be stored in the evidence room due to size, condition, or hazard, the evidence custodian shall make arrangements for secure storage in other areas.
- E. Secure storage within the evidence storage rooms is available for drugs, weapons, valuables, cash, and items that require refrigeration or freezing.

- F. The metal storage lockers in the prisoner intake garage shall store flammable or caustic materials.

#### **VI. Chain of Custody and Control**

- A. Once evidence has been placed into the temporary lockers it will be the responsibility of the evidence custodian to:
  - 1. Remove the item from the temporary locker.
  - 2. Ensure that the property was entered into the electronic evidence / property control system.
  - 3. Ensure that the item was properly prepared, labeled, and packaged, and that any seals are intact. Items that are not in compliance may be rejected.
  - 4. Account for the items listed in the electronic evidence / property control system.
  - 5. Transfer the property to an evidence storage room.
  - 6. Enter the final property location in the electronic evidence / property control system.

#### **VII. Restricted Access to Evidence Storage Rooms**

Only those persons authorized by the Chief of Police will be allowed access to the evidence storage rooms. If there is a need for someone else to have access, that person will be escorted by the evidence custodian or an authorized person, and an entry will be made in the visitor's log. The log will document the time, date, person's signature or initials, name, and the reason for entry. A list of authorized evidence custodians can be found in Attachment A. Back-up evidence custodians should only be used if the primary custodian is unavailable.

#### **VIII. Records of Property in Custody**

The chain of custody will be maintained in the electronic evidence / property control system by the receiving officer. The records of any transaction or transfer involving physical evidence shall include:

- A. Name of the person possessing the evidence collected for processing or storage.
- B. The date and time of every transaction or transfer.
- C. Name of the person receiving the evidence.
- D. Reason for the transaction.

- E. Name of any laboratory or agency where the evidence was transferred to or received from.
- F. Type of examination requested or the reason for the transfer of the evidence.
- G. Any other pertinent information relating to the transaction/transfer of the evidence.

**IX. Security and Accountability of Controlled Substances, Weapons, or Explosives Used for Investigative or Training Purposes**

- A. This department does not provide controlled substances, weapons or explosives seized as evidence or property for the purpose of investigations or training. If such items are seized and are found to be useful for training purposes, photographs and / or videos shall be used in lieu of the actual item.

**X. Reports and Inspections**

- A. Unannounced inspections to determine adherence to procedures used for the control of property shall be conducted at least once a year by the Chief of Police or his designee. A report to the Chief of Police shall be completed by the person conducting the inspection describing the inspection's findings.
- B. An inspection to determine adherence to procedures used for the control of evidence and recovered property shall be conducted semi-annually by the evidence custodian.
- C. When a change in the evidence custodian occurs, an audit will be conducted by the new evidence custodian and a designee of the Chief of Police to ensure that records are correct and properly annotated. A report to the Chief of Police shall be completed by those conducting the audit describing the audit's findings.
- D. An audit in compliance with the PLEAC Evidence Irregularity Audit Table found in Attachment B shall be completed when there is reason to believe that evidence has been tampered with, or if the evidence custodian has been removed for irregularities.
- E. Annually, an audit should be conducted of property held by the department. This audit shall be conducted by a supervisor not routinely or directly connected with evidence and property control.

**XI. Disposition of Property**

- A. It is the responsibility of the evidence custodian to purge the evidence storage rooms of any property that has little or no value, the ownership is unknown, evidence in which the case has been disposed of and all appellate opportunities exhausted, or evidence where the crime's statute of limitation is past one year.

- B. These purges may involve review of the case files, consultation with the officer who handled the case, or consultation with the District Attorney's office.
- C. If possible, property that is purged should be returned to the owner.
- D. The disposition of the property shall be properly documented in the electronic evidence / property control system, or noted on the Seized / Property Form for cases which occurred prior to the use of the electronic system.
- E. Disposal of guns, drugs, jewelry, money, and high value items shall be verified by a second evidence custodian.
- F. Final disposition of all found property should be accomplished within six months from the date of seizure, except for the following:
  - 1. Bicycles in good condition will be store for a period of 90 days. If no person has claimed a seized bicycle after 90 days, it shall be donated to a charitable organization, or destroyed. All bicycles deemed to be in a deplorable condition, or valueless, shall be considered trash, and disposed of immediately.
  - 2. Firearms shall be retained for no less than 1 year from the date of seizure and shall only be disposed of after proper court orders for destruction are obtained. Under no circumstances shall firearms be released to the person/s who found the weapon/s.
- G. Any property seized from a prisoner, which is neither contraband nor evidence, and to be held for safekeeping, shall be disposed of in accordance with department policy, after thirty (30) days.

## **XII. Civil Property**

All property acquired through the civil process function or asset forfeiture proceedings shall be submitted, maintained, and disposed of in accordance with this policy and the civil court order.

## **XIII. Attachments**

- A. Personnel designated as evidence custodians
- B. PLEAC Evidence Irregularity Audit Table
- C. Property Claim Receipt form

**ATTACHMENT A**

Evidence Custodians

Primary – Detective Robert Baiada

Back-Up #1 – Detective Stephen Craig

Back-Up #2 – Detective Corporal Robert Chiarlanza

NOTE: Evidence custodians should be contacted in the order they are listed above.



**ATTACHMENT B**

**Evidence Irregularity Audit Table**

The below table should be used by agencies when determining the appropriate sample size for conducting audits of high risk property as required by Standard 3.6.6 (c). This table only applies to high risk property and only for those circumstances when there is an irregularity in the evidence process. The sample sizes in this table have been calculated based on a 95 percent confidence level and a confidence interval of +/- 3 percent.

When using this table, agencies should determine the total amount of high risk property they currently possess and find that number under "Pieces of High Risk Evidence/Property". The corresponding "Required Sample Size" should be applied when conducting the respective audit. If the exact number for "Pieces of High Risk Evidence/Property" is not listed, the next higher number should be used.

If an error rate of more than 3 percent is discovered when conducting the audit, a complete inventory of the high risk property must be performed.

<b>Pieces of High Risk Evidence/Property</b>	<b>+/- 3% Required Sample Size</b>
100	92
250	203
500	341
1000	516
1500	624
2000	696
2500	748
3000	787
3500	818
4000	843
4500	863
5000	880
5500	894
6000	906
6500	917
7000	926
7500	934
8000	942
8500	948
9000	959
10000	964
15000	996
20000	1013
25000	1023
50000	1045
100000	1056

**ATTACHMENT C**



**Springfield Township Police Department  
 Prisoner Property Record**

Officer Printed Name:		Report #:
Officer Signature:		Date:
		Time:
<b>PROPERTY OWNER INFORMATION</b>		
Owner Name		Owner DOB:
Owner Address:		Owner SSN:
		Owner Phone #:
		Owner Phone #:
<b>PROPERTY INVENTORY</b>		
1.	6.	
2.	7.	
3.	8.	
4.	9.	
5.	10.	
<p>Being the owner of the above listed property, and recognizing that I am a prisoner who is not free to leave, I understand that the above property will be held by the Springfield Township Police Department, and turned over to the contact person I have named below. If said property is not picked up within thirty (30) days of the date listed above, the property will be destroyed and / or confiscated by the Springfield Township Police Department. By signing below, I have read and understand this statement.</p>		
Property Owner's Signature:		
<b>CONTACT PERSON INFORMATION</b>		
Contact Name:		Relation to Owner:
Contact Address:		Contact Phone #:
		Contact Phone #:
Contact Called:		Scheduled Pickup Date:
Left Message:		Other:
<b>PROPERTY RELEASE</b>		
Property Released?    { }-YES { }-NO		
Name:		Signature:
Address:		Date:
Phone #:		Time:
Witness Name:		Witness
		Signature:
<b>PROPERTY DESTRUCTION</b>		
Property Destroyed?    { }-YES { }-NO		
Date:		Time:
Employee Name:		Employee Signature:
Witness Name:		Witness Signature:
Reason For Destruction:		
Other:		