

Introduction to exhibit and property management

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Policy statement and principles

What

Two key statutes govern the way that property coming into Police possession is to be managed - [Search and Surveillance Act 2012](#) for exhibits and [Policing Act 2008](#) for found property. The [Health and Safety at Work Act 2015](#) also requires Police to ensure the safety of its workers. While the Acts require different procedures to be followed, general responsibilities for the receipt and safe and secure management and disposal of any property in Police custody remains the same if we are to ensure that our statutory responsibilities are met.

An exhibit is any item which comes into Police possession relevant to an investigation, whether or not it is produced in formal evidence. Exhibits come to Police attention in a variety of forms and by diverse means. Whether they are physical, documentary, electronic, or biological, the need for consistency in how they are managed is critical to ensure the integrity of exhibits is maintained.

Exhibits and property in Police possession are electronically captured and managed in the Police Register of Property (PROP) enabling Police to know what we have, why we have it, where it is and when it should be disposed of. This property management system supports police compliance with legislation, policy and process. It includes other systems, specifically; Information Management Tool (IMT) and the National Intelligence Application (NIA) Forensics Information Management System (FIMS)/Forensic Exhibit (FE) module that link to each other and reflect what is entered in those systems in PROP, providing a single source of data for property and exhibits. The systems have been designed so that cases are unable to be closed/filed until exhibits have been disposed of.

Why

The relevance of an exhibit is not always understood at the time of recovery and may only become apparent as the enquiry progresses. The OC Investigation must ensure that regardless of how, when or what is seized, the exhibit is managed in line with approved policies, processes, procedures and protocols, so that health and safety issues are fully considered, and integrity and accountability is maintained.

Found property must also be managed in line with approved processes to meet health and safety requirements, provide integrity and accountability, and comply with relevant legislation.

How

Police staff will record and maintain records of all exhibits and other property coming into Police possession in the Police Register of Property (PROP) system. When exhibits and property are captured in the PROP, it creates a unique number that is similar to an aircraft boarding pass alpha-numeric identifier, e.g. AQN1BA. The PROP number MUST be clearly written and used on all packaging and labelling of items. It is the only way to uniquely identify each item across New Zealand.

Police staff must also:

- safely manage hazards at all times including within exhibit stores and storage areas
- use appropriate methods to recover exhibits (or items that could become exhibits) and preserve their evidential value
- appropriately and safely package exhibits
- store exhibits and found property in approved exhibit stores or other approved secure storage areas to ensure security and integrity is maintained at all times
- maintain the location within the store, the chain of custody and disposal status in PROP
- comply with the statutory requirements for return, release, disposal, or destruction of exhibits and property received by Police.

NOTES:

The Police Register of Property (PROP) system commenced on **28 June 2020**. However, there will be cases where the old district numbering system is still in use. These numbers may be captured in the PROP 'alternative reference' field to enable ongoing inquiries.

Exhibits and property are not being back captured, unless Districts choose to back capture their own, with the following exception:

- all firearms, their parts, ammunition and explosives in Police possession prior to PROP implementation **must** be back-captured into PROP.

Overview

Purpose of the 'Exhibit and property management' chapter

The 'Exhibit and property management' chapter, comprising of 6 parts, details procedures (or provides links to detailed procedures in other chapters) for handling and managing property coming into Police possession including:

- exhibits
- found property
- property for safekeeping (other than found property) where ownership is unknown at the time or is in dispute
- detained persons' property
- deceased persons' property
- any other property as directed, in general or specific terms, by the District Commander or Director.

The 6 part 'Exhibit and property management' chapter details procedures (or provides links to procedures) for the management of the item for the entire time it is in Police possession including:

- receipt
- packaging and handling
- storage
- retention by Police
- disposal, which includes return to the owner or person entitled to possession, forfeiture to the Crown or another person, sale, and destruction.

Parts of the 'Exhibit and property management' chapter

The 'Exhibit and property management' chapter is comprised of these parts:

- '**Introduction to Exhibit and property management**' - This includes:
 - Exhibit and property related definitions that apply throughout the 'Exhibit and property management' chapter
 - Roles and responsibilities in relation to exhibits.
- '[Receiving property and exhibits](#)' - This includes:
 - Recording requirements for property coming into Police possession
 - Procedures for the receipt of found property, exhibits (seized, produced, detained and removed property)
 - Links to more detailed procedures for the receipt of detainees or deceased person's property being held for safekeeping.
- '[Packaging, handling, and storage of exhibits](#)' - This includes:
 - General packaging requirements (links to a simple '[Exhibit and property handling](#)' poster demonstrating examples of available packaging - see PDF below)
 - Special considerations for recovering, preserving and packaging some exhibits
 - Requirements for storage in exhibit or general property stores
 - Standards for setting up and managing exhibit stores, including temporary exhibit stores and homicide and large scale investigation storage
 - Managing hazards during storage.

 [Exhibit and Property Handling Poster](#)

1.38 MB

- '[Custody and disposal of exhibits](#)' - This includes:
 - How long can exhibits be held by Police
 - Summary of disposal actions, including return to owner, destruction, forfeiture to the Crown or another person, sale, or retention by Police.
- '[Disposal of found property](#)' - This includes:
 - Return to owners or finders
 - Destruction
 - Sale

- Restitution of stolen property
- Recording of disposal information in NIA for property not returned to owner or finder
- Forfeiture to the Crown
- [‘Reporting and internal control checks’](#)

Key points to note in relation to exhibits

Before seizing an item consider if it is or could be required as an exhibit. Does it contain evidential value, or can it be photographed and left in-situ? If an item is seized, would a photograph be sufficient for evidential purposes, once the item has been examined? Remember, unlawful items must be seized or produced.

It is important to continually assess the need to retain exhibits. Anything that has been seized or produced must, if it is not required for investigative or evidential purposes, or unless it is liable to forfeiture to the Crown or any other person, be:

- returned to its owner or person entitled to possession, or
- made the subject of an application under section [154](#) (relating to disputed ownership), or
- disposed of under section [160](#) (unlawful items), or [161](#) (forensic copies), or
- destroyed if it is:
 - perishable and has become rotten or otherwise deteriorated, or is likely to before it can dealt with under any of the above options, or
 - likely to pose a risk to public health.

Exhibits must be released from Police custody immediately once the first of the following occurs:

- a decision is made not to bring proceedings
- the item is forfeited to the Crown or any other person or released under a District Court order
- if proceedings for an offence have not been commenced before the date that is **6 months** after the thing was seized or produced and a request has been made for the return of the item
- where proceedings are brought and they are withdrawn, dismissed or completed, or
- the thing is otherwise disposed of.
([s151](#))

Relevant legislation

- [Policing Act 2008](#) for lost and found property
- [Search and Surveillance Act 2012](#) for all seized, produced, detained and removed property
- [Health and Safety at Work Act 2015](#) - applies to all exhibit and property related handling and management
- [Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act 1996](#) (HSNO) - applies to all exhibit and property related handling and management

References to statutes

References to sections or to ‘the Act’ in the ‘Exhibit and property management’ chapter are to the [Search and Surveillance Act 2012](#) unless otherwise stated.

Relevant related policy

[National Recording Standard](#) - Throughout this policy, be aware of NRS1.2.1, where you must record the most accurate information available at the time of recording. Where options exist, record the most specific accurate option available.

When new information becomes available, update relevant records with that information.

Exhibit and other property related definitions

These definitions apply across [all parts](#) of the 'Exhibit and property management' chapter unless stated otherwise.

Term	Meaning
Exhibit	Any item that comes into possession of Police that may be relevant to an investigation or judicial process.
Property	Any item that comes into possession of Police and includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Exhibits- Found property- Deceased persons' property- Detainee' property- Property for safekeeping- Property impounded under statutory authority
Police Register of Property (PROP)	The Police Register of Property (PROP) is the system used by Police to electronically record and maintain records of all exhibits and other property coming into Police possession.

Roles and responsibilities in relation to exhibits

This table summarises roles and responsibilities within Police in relation to exhibits.

Role	Responsibility
Officer in charge of case (O/C Case) or Officer in Charge of exhibit (O/C Exhibits)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensures that health and safety is considered at each stage of the investigation, including the crime scene. - Determines whether exhibit has relevancy and probative value before seizing. - Considers photographing exhibit in-situ before uplifting. - Ensures that forensic integrity of exhibit is maintained, and minimises contamination risks (see Crime Scene Examination chapter). - Packages exhibits in appropriate packaging giving consideration to wellness and safety, and forensic requirements. - Ensures that documentation is complete, including a NIA occurrence number. - Ensures that what has been seized is captured in PROP and a receipt is supplied to the person the items were seized from. - Ensures that ongoing assessment is made as to the relevancy and necessity to retain the exhibit, and takes steps to dispose of the exhibit if it is no longer relevant or necessary. - Ensures that an order for destruction / forfeiture is requested in the prosecution file if appropriate. - Ensures retrieval of any exhibits lodged at court following an appeal period, and the appropriate disposal of any exhibits.
Property Exhibits Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensures that exhibit is packaged correctly and safely. - Ensures that documentation accompanying exhibit is completed correctly. - Only accepts exhibits if packaging or documentation is of an acceptable standard. - Liaises with OC case or supervisor when exhibits or documentation is not up to standard. - Ensures that exhibits are recorded in PROP. - Records the chain of custody for exhibits received, managed within the store, and subsequently disposed of. - Maintains integrity of exhibits at all times by adhering to the highest correct level of security. - Ensures that disposal of exhibits is managed in accordance with this policy. - Facilitates monthly Reporting and internal control checks as required by this policy. - Manages aged exhibits in compliance with this policy.
Supervisor of OC case	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monitors staff to ensure that exhibits seized are relevant and necessary. - Monitors compliance with packaging and documentation. - Continues to assess the requirement to retain exhibits.
Fingerprint officer / photographer / Document examiner / Digital Forensic Unit (DFU)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Records chain of custody when transferring possession of any exhibits for fingerprint examination or photography. - Ensures integrity and security whilst fingerprinting or photographing the exhibit.
Police Prosecutor / Crown Solicitor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensures that discussion of exhibit presentation forms part of the case memorandum process. - Ensures that order for destruction / forfeiture is sought from the court if this has been requested by the OC case.
Case management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensures that any orders for destruction or forfeiture feature on the caption and summary and Prosecution POL258P prior to hearing. - Ensures that exhibits are returned / disposed of before file is closed and filed.

