Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation - Criminalistics Services Division (OSBI CSD)
Evidence Packaging and Sealing Guidelines

Evidence submitted to the OSBI CSD must be stored in an appropriate container under proper seal. The seal must be sufficient to prevent item(s) contained from being lost, removed, or contaminated by outside sources. A container is considered "appropriate" and "properly sealed" only if its contents cannot readily escape and only if entering the container results in obvious damage/alteration to the container or its seal.

1. All evidence must be packaged in a suitable container that protects the evidence from loss, cross-transfer, or contamination.

    a) Other evidence, such as liquids may require multiple containers. For example, containers of liquid samples must be stored in a plastic bag, bucket, or other container that will contain the liquid if the immediate container leaks.

    b) Glass containers should be placed inside a container that will also protect the glass from breaking.

    c) Containers used to protect the immediate evidence package from leaks or breakage may be treated as convenience packages. However, only one item should be in each "convenience package" to prevent contamination in the event of a leak.

2. All evidence must bear a proper seal. A proper seal includes the initials or other unique identification of the person sealing the evidence and an acceptable evidence container seal. The following should be used as a guide for acceptable evidence container seals:

    a) Boxes: A box container seal includes the long seam at both the top and bottom of the box. Boxes should be sealed with two-inch tape, IPG N8315 or equal/better. Evidence tape may also be acceptable.

    b) Paper sacks, bags: All sack-like containers should be sealed by folding down the flap of the sack across the top and placing a continuous piece of 2 inch tape, IPG N8315 or equal/better, across the fold and around the sack edges. Evidence tape may also acceptable.

    c) Envelopes: The top (unsealed) flap of the envelope should be sealed along or across the seam using two inch tape, IPG N8315 or equal/better, or using evidence tape.

d) Cans: One continuous piece of evidence tape across the top and down the sides of the container (including buckets with lids) or two separate pieces of evidence tape across from each other are to be used to seal all can-like containers. The seal must be marked or initialed. No clear adhesive tape is to be used on cans if it can be peeled off without evidence of removal.

e) Kits: Boxed sexual assault kits, GSR kits, and other purchased kits are acceptable with the seal provided by the kit manufacturer. Envelope-style sexual assault kits shall meet the evidence sealing requirement for envelopes as listed in 2.c above.

f) Bulky Evidence: Some items of evidence do not lend themselves to a container. In those cases, the area of interest for analysis should be isolated, protected and marked or initialed. Examples are doors or car bumpers.

3. Evidence which is properly sealed and marked for identification may then be placed in unsealed containers such as boxes or bags for the purpose of grouping items of evidence or for the convenience of carrying the evidence without that container having to meet the requirements of identification and sealing, as long as evidence security requirements are otherwise met. These containers should be marked as a "convenience package" or "convenience container."

4. Heat sealing a container of an item of evidence is also acceptable. Identifying marks or initials of the person sealing the evidence must be present across the heat seal.

5. The submitting officer will be expected to correct improperly sealed evidence prior to the evidence being accepted by the lab. If evidence received by the laboratory has an acceptable evidence seal but is not initialed or marked and that individual is not available to remedy the problem, the receiving personnel will place a piece of evidence tape across the evidence seal at an approximate 90 degree angle and initial across the tape or place the entire evidence container in a heat sealed container and initial across the heat seal.