Gathering/Preserving Evidence

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The proper handling of evidence will assist investigators in proving a case. Therefore, it is important that police officers make every effort to ensure that property is not destroyed, overlooked or contaminated and that there is no break in continuity when collecting evidence from any scene.

1. When at the scene of a major criminal investigation, the police officer will
   - secure and protect the scene
   - exercise all due caution to ensure that evidence is not contaminated, overlooked or destroyed
   - request a forensic investigator from Forensic Identification Services (FIS) attend the scene
   - only permit those directly involved in the investigation access to the scene

2. When seizing property or collecting evidence, the police officer or forensic investigator will
   - protect the property or evidence for analysis
   - when necessary, ensure the item is photographed and/or videotaped before it is disturbed
   - handle the item no more than necessary
   - place the item in the appropriate evidence container
   - seal the evidence container
   - submit the property for analysis

3. When the property is no longer required for investigation or court purposes, the case manager will
   - if ownership cannot be established, return it to the person from whom it was obtained, providing all legal requirements have been met
   - if ownership and/or lawful entitlement of property are disputed, ensure the property is retained for further investigation
   - if ownership of the property is established
     - contact the appropriate crown attorney for permission to release the property, whenever possible
     - advise the owner where to pick up the property

4. Upon receiving instruction from the case manager that the property is to be released, the Property & Evidence Management Unit (PEMU) clerk will
   - ensure the property is identifiable
   - arrange with the owner or claimant to pick up the property

5. Prior to releasing the property to a claimant, the PEMU clerk will
• ensure the claimant is entitled to the property, as indicated by the case manager
• ensure the claimant provides sufficient identification
• instruct the claimant to sign for the receipt of the property