

# Fire Debris Packaging

Unused lined metal paint cans with tight fitting friction lids



Septa top cans not recommended- not airtight as advertised



Nylon bags- use for evidence that does not fit well into cans- bedding, bulky clothing, etc.



The size of the container is determined by the size of the evidence- fill approximately half full

# Fire Debris Packaging

Half full can



Overstuffed can



Evidence is much too small for this large can  
(5 gallon)



The size of the container is determined by the size of the evidence- fill approximately half full

# General Collection Tips

**Collect samples that are only partially burned if possible**



- ▶ Collect separate samples of the same material from an area that has been protected from the fire (Comparison Sample).
- ▶ Absorbent materials better than non-absorbent materials.
  - ▶ Carpeting & padding, fabric from clothing, linens, upholstery, soil, paper, & soft wood.
- ▶ Protected surfaces:
  - ▶ Seams, joints, and cracks

# Collection- Tools

- ▶ Use disposable utensils such as gloves, forceps, and pipettes whenever possible to collect evidence. Change between each sample to avoid cross contamination.
- ▶ When using reusable tools such as shovels, saws, chisels and hammers, clean the tool between each sample with dish detergent and water, rinse well.

**Do NOT place gloves, pipets, razors or other tools in evidence container**



# Sealing Evidence

**Close evidence containers so they are air tight**



**Clean any debris from the groove around the edge before closing to obtain a tight seal**

**Tape seal and initial top of can**



**Protect and preserve evidence during transport to the laboratory**

# Liquid Samples

Use glass bottles with Teflon lined screw caps.  
Secure against breakage during transport.



Only need ~1 oz. for analysis- if sample is dirty  
or bi-layered more is better



“Clan lab” packs are available from the BCA

# Liquid Samples- Containers

- ▶ **Original containers (gas cans or lighter fluid bottles)**
  - ▶ Liquid sample only- place 1 oz in a glass bottle with a Teflon lined screw cap. Secure and retain the container and remaining liquid (do not submit).
- ▶ **Container analysis only (latent prints, DNA)**
  - ▶ Intact container- transfer liquid to another suitable container and retain separately (do not submit). Air-out and seal openings of the container with the original cap(s).
  - ▶ Ruptured and cap-less containers- transfer liquid to another suitable container and retain separately (do not submit). Air-out the questioned evidence container.
- ▶ **Both Liquid and Container analysis**
  - ▶ Submit one liquid sample. Retain excess liquid in another suitable container (do not submit).
  - ▶ Submit aired out container.

# Liquid Samples- Containers

Photograph original container



Include close-up of ingredient list



Submit photos to the lab with the evidence

# Special Considerations

**Soil samples must be kept frozen from the time of collection to the time of analysis**



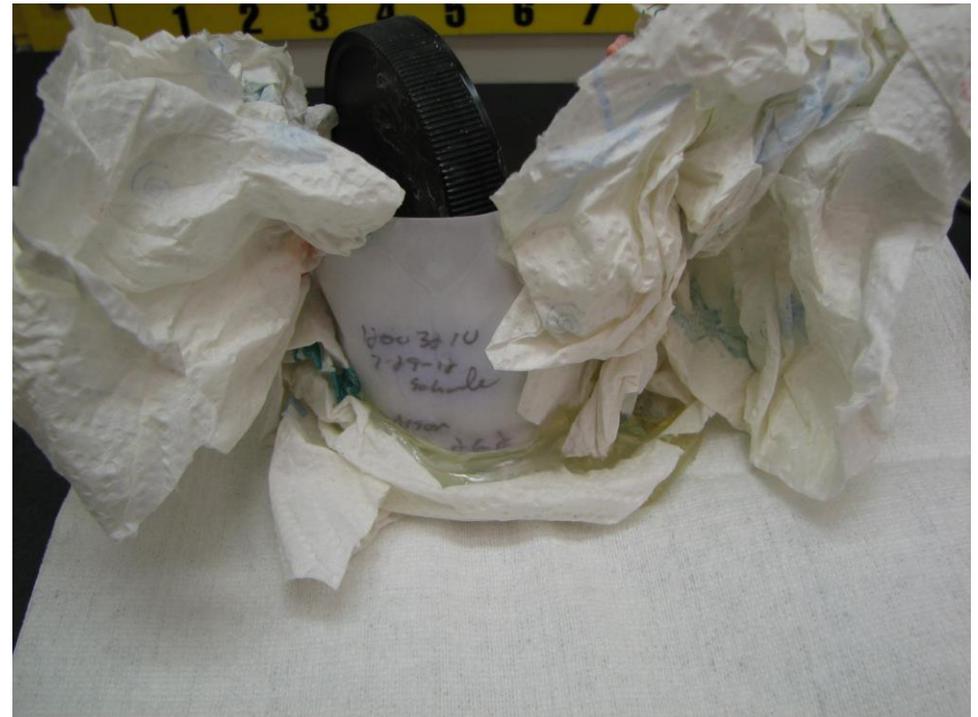
**Bacteria in soil can degrade organic compounds**

## **CLOTHING**

- ▶ Package clothing items separately, including shoes
- ▶ Wet clothes are ok- DO NOT dry them out first
- ▶ Use appropriate sized container- only half full- 3.5 & 5 gallon cans work well for bulky clothing items and shoes

# Practices to Avoid

- ▶ Do NOT package evidence in paper bags or cardboard boxes. If DNA/LP is also required, please submit evidence ASAP and inform the lab that both exams are needed.
- ▶ Do NOT package evidence in regular plastic bags. Ampac bags are specifically made for fire debris.
- ▶ Do NOT submit leaking containers (if the outside is wet or you can smell vapors, the evidence is not packaged properly).



# Practices to Avoid

- ▶ Do NOT store evidence containers inside each other.
- ▶ Keep container closed, open only at the time of collection.
- ▶ Do NOT store evidence containers in trunks or vehicles or in garage areas where they may be contaminated with petroleum products.
- ▶ Do NOT submit more than one case per package- each case must be packaged individually

Do NOT mark evidence before placing in container



Evidence can become contaminated by solvents in the pen or marker

# Submit Evidence

**Deliver in person, via US Mail,  
or private courier**

**MN Bureau of Criminal Apprehension  
Forensic Science Laboratory  
Attention Evidence Intake  
1430 Maryland Avenue East  
St. Paul, MN 55106**

**For questions or further information  
contact:**

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