

# Metropolitan Police Academy



## 3.4 Property

## Introduction

In their duties, patrol officers will be required on occasion to take possession of various items of property. Such property may be needed as evidence for a trial, held for an arrestee until he or she is released, safeguarded for a citizen who lost something, or for a multitude of other reasons. Due to the sheer volume of property that MPD encounters, MPD has created an entire system for its collection and processing. The system spans the path of items, from the district all the way to the Evidence Control Division. Such a system would not be effective without a classification process that properly tracks the thousands of pieces of property that the department encounters on a yearly basis.

MPD officers must be adept at classifying property correctly in addition to being able to properly collect and safeguard it. There are few more important tasks MPD officers encounter than taking property into the custody of the department. Personal property, evidence, and other items are of the utmost importance to those connected with them. Consequently, the Department has instituted strict policies and procedures that allow MPD to take property into custody. Such tasks are made easier by specialized paperwork that matches each property task with its proper form. This lesson is an introduction to MPD property rules and procedures.

### 3.4.1 Identify Property Officer, Evidence Control Division, Evidence on Q Database, Station Clerk, and Property Clerk

MPD officers must be adept at handling property from its recovery out in the field to its actual processing at a MPD district station. It is important that MPD officers know each step of the property control process as well as the different jobs performed by those within MPD who are tasked with taking custody of the property after the officer is finished with it.

Per G.O. 601.01, "in all cases of property which comes into the possession of the Department, it is the responsibility of the member who first handles the property to ensure that the property is properly recorded and processed." The officer who completes the **Property Record** must also either tag (PD285) or secure the property in a **Property Bag** (PD14). The recovering officer must also make a record entry into the **Property Book** (PD82).

All property recovered by MPD officers must be reported on an Incident Report (PD251) in addition to the Property Record. All related reports, to include arrest paperwork, must denote the same Property Book (PD82) information throughout the handling of the arrest and incident.

There are several property books in a station and members shall complete each book based on the corresponding type of property they are documenting. Examples include prisoners, money, vehicle, and drugs. If drugs have been collected, they must be documented in the Drugs Property Books as well as placed in the **Narcotics Evidence Locker**.

The recovering officer is responsible for ensuring that all property is properly documented and safeguarded until he or she is relieved of the responsibility by the element **Property Officer**. After the recovering officer is finished with the Property Record, he or she will then bring it to a lieutenant or above for approval. The property is then ready to be taken to the element Property Officer.

The element Property Officer inspects the forms for accuracy and ensures that all information is entered into the **Evidence on Q database**, a database that is used by MPD for the tracking of all evidence. The element Property Officer also makes sure the description in the property book and property record match the actual item of property. Then, the Property Record is given a **Property Control Number**. This prepares the recovered property for transmittal to the **Property Control Branch**. Before forwarding an item, the element Property Officer must ensure that all property is securely wrapped, tied, marked, and/or tagged.

The element Property Officer is responsible for the security and safekeeping of property held at the element until its proper transfer to the **Evidence Control Division**. A transfer must be accompanied by the Property Record (PD81). Element Property Officers also make attempts to notify owners or their families of any property being held by MPD at their respective element. The Evidence Control Division controls the inventory of all types of property that comes into the possession of MPD.

In addition, the element Property Officer is responsible for:

- maintaining custody and control over all property held at the element
- safeguarding all evidence so as to maintain a proper chain of custody for court
- reviewing all property records (PD81s) and property listed thereon for accuracy and completeness;
- ensuring that miscellaneous property such as clothing, tools, and other loose items are securely wrapped or boxed with a property tag attached
- ensuring that all serial numbers and identification numbers are correctly entered on the property record
- continually reviewing the Property Book (PD82) to ensure that all items are listed accurately, and that the property control numbers are listed for all items.

When the element Property Officer is not available, the primary contact for all property issues becomes the element **Station Clerk**. Station Clerks review each entry made on the Property Book during their respective shifts. This is to ensure that personnel are adhering to MPD directives when taking possession of property. When the element Property Officer is not present, the Station Clerk makes certain the property destined for the element's property office is properly secured. When authorized, the Station Clerk also returns property to claimants.

The MPD **Property Clerk** is responsible for all property in the possession of the Evidence Control Division. Any disputes regarding property are resolved by the MPD Property Clerk. The MPD Property Clerk is a lieutenant or higher assigned to the Evidence Control Division.

### **3.4.2 Classify property that comes into departmental custody**

#### **Found Property**

This is any property that the department comes into contact with that has no other obvious classification. This property has no current use as evidence and is found by an officer or a citizen who presented the property to an officer. Every attempt is made to contact the owner for all found property. Further description of how to handle and process Found Property is contained at the end of this lesson.

**NOTE:** For bicycles, you must check the National Bicycle registry for ownership of found bicycles.

**NOTE:** Property found at Metro facilities or on conveyances is turned over to WMATA employees who will

provide the MPD member with a receipt.

### **Abandoned Property**

Abandoned property is found property that is specifically known to have been abandoned by someone. This type of property is processed in the same manner as Found Property. The primary difference between Found Property and Abandoned Property is the likelihood of finding an owner willing to accept the property.

**NOTE:** Abandoned Vehicles are discussed in the Traffic training block.

### **Evidence**

Evidence is physical proof that supports an assertion of alleged fact. In most MPD applications, evidence supports a criminal charge. Evidence is recorded on a MPD Property Record (PD81) in a Property Book (PD82). Narcotics are recorded on a DEA 7. Evidence is kept separate from all other types of property.

### **Impounded Vehicles**

These are vehicles that MPD took possession of in order to take the vehicle off a public highway or street. There are many reasons why MPD will want to do this. Reasons can be criminal or non-criminal in nature. For example, there is a drunk driver who will be released in a few hours who cannot turn his vehicle over to a licensed, sober driver in the meantime. Another possible reason for MPD to impound a vehicle is if it is unregistered for over thirty (30) days. An Incident Report (PD251), Property Record (PD81), and Property Book entry (PD82) are required for impounded vehicles.

In the case of abandoned/junk cars that are not creating a safety hazard or need for immediate removal, officers should give a ticket to the owner/claimant, be sure to list the VIN on NOI if there is no tag, and notify the Department of Public Works (DPW) for removal. This can be done via the 311 App on your MPD issued phone.

### **Property Removed from Impounded Vehicles**

Per G.O. 602.01, all impounded vehicles must be safeguarded by MPD. If a vehicle remains impounded for over twenty-four (24) hours, MPD will take possession of all property in the vehicle. The property is classified as *Removed from Impounded Vehicle*. All property is put on a Property Record (PD81) and in a Property Book (PD82).

### **Safekeeping**

Occasionally, members take unattended property into custody so that it may be safeguarded until the owner is located. Such property shall be classified as *Safekeeping* and handled in the same manner as Found Property described above. A property record (PD81) and Property Book (PD82) are required for Safekeeping items. An Incident Report is also required. Attempts must be made at locating the owner while still on the original scene. Further attempts must be made prior to the end of the officer's tour of duty.

If a vehicle is encountered by MPD that has been reported stolen, MPD must take possession of the vehicle. It is then either released to the owner or an owner representative on the scene or it is taken to a private tow lot. Either way, an entry into the Property Book (PD82) is made and an Incident Report (PD 251) is completed. If the vehicle is released to the owner or an owner's representative on the scene, a Property Released on Scene (PD81A) form is required with no Property Record (PD81). However, if the vehicle cannot be released on scene and is towed, then only the Incident Report (PD251) and Property

Record (PD81) are utilized.

### **Suspected Proceeds of a Crime**

This property is kept separate from prisoner property. Proceeds are usually taken from a person at the time of arrest. As its classification suggests, proceeds of a crime are suspected of having been acquired through the commission of a crime. For example, a person arrested for robbery may have a large amount of money in his or her possession that is suspected to have been taken during the crime. This money can be taken from the arrestee and classified as *Suspected Proceeds of a Crime*.

All seized money, regardless of classification, must have an accompanying Property Record (PD81) and must be photographed by an evidence technician. The money shall be separated by denominations when photographed. In the event that the money recovered is over \$3,000, then a continuation report (PD202A) is used to record the exact denominations of the bills. The money shall also be placed in individual property bags by denominations. In addition, a minimum of two sworn members shall be present during the counting of the money. The money is required to be counted twice before it is turned over to the element Property Officer or Station Clerk.

**NOTE:** *Suspected Proceeds of a Crime* is only a temporary classification. The element Property Officer is responsible for notifying the recovering member and their official if the suspected proceeds have not been reclassified after ten (10) days. The recovering officer must reclassify or release the property within five (5) days of being notified by the element Property Officer or Property Clerk of the reclassification requirement.

Ultimately, Suspected Proceeds of a Crime shall either be released (via PD81C) or reclassified (via PD81D) as Found Property, Safekeeping, Prisoner Property, etc. The member papering the case is responsible for completing the PD81C in case the case has not already been papered and an AUSA or AAG subsequently releases any evidence hold on the property.

### **Turned over to Police for Destruction**

This type of property has been given to the police department specifically in order for it to be destroyed. *Turned over to Police for Destruction* is written on the Property Record (PD81) and in the Property Book (PD82). Fireworks are the most common example and they will be discussed in an ACADIS module.

**NOTE:** Remember from a previous lesson that there are notifications that must be made to the Teletype Unit whenever a member is recovering, safekeeping, and impounding vehicles or license plates and any recovered, lost, or stolen weapons. Notifying Teletype is an integral part of the process in order to keep track of certain items that come into possession of the department.

## **3.4.3 Identify the PD forms related to handling property**

In all cases where property comes into the possession of the department, it is the responsibility of the member who first handles the property to ensure that the property is accurately recorded and processed in accordance with the General Orders, taking special care to note timeliness, make a Violent Crime Suppression Division (VCSD) notification, the related crimes, and when \$1,000.00 or more is involved. There are at least nine types of MPD forms that allow sworn members to process and safeguard property. These forms are utilized until the Property Record is signed and the property is finally turned over to the

element Property Officer. Members need to understand each type of form in order to properly take possession of the various types of recovered property.

### **Property Bags/Envelopes (PD14)**

All property taken into custody in any MPD facility needs to be securely wrapped, tied, boxed, marked, and/or tagged before it can be delivered to the Property Control Branch. Small articles and items which can reasonably fit inside should be placed inside a PD14 envelope/bag. This is the most commonly used PD form when taking property into custody. A good way to remember what goes into a PD14 is by referring to it as the "Property Bag." Property Bags/Envelopes, which are used to contain Prisoner Property, Found Property, etc., and Evidence Bags/Envelope, which are used to contain evidence shall be filled out the same way, except for the classification that is listed on the top of the bag.

Property Bags/Envelopes (PD14) can be found in the station. It is a good idea for Officers to also carry Property Bags with them on the street to handle situation when they take items from someone who has been placed under arrest. The items should be placed directly in the Property Bag to avoid loss.

Certain items are prohibited from being placed in a Property Bag and should be discarded. This includes:

- opened, perishable items
- food or beverages
- flammable items such as lighters or matches
- hazardous items

In addition to storing items of evidence at MPD facilities, the Property Bag/Envelope can be used to package items to submit for forensic testing at the Department of Forensic Sciences. When packaging items to be sent to DFS for testing, members will fill out and seal the Property Bag/Envelope normally. They will then sign, date, and place their CAD on the reverse side of the bag under the red *Tamper Evident* seal.

### **Property Tags (PD285)**

A Property Tag (PD285) follows the same guidelines as the Property Bag/Envelope (PD14). It is used for any item that does not fit into the Property Bag/Envelope or Evidence Bag/Envelope. All of the same information from the Property Bag should be transferred to the Property Tag. When a Property Tag is placed on an item, it should still be secured and nothing hazardous or dangerous should be tagged.

### **Property Book (PD82)**

A Property Book (PD82) is located in each station area. Officers are required to input information regarding any and all property taken into the custody of the department onto a page of the Property Book. This should be all of the same information from the Property Bag or Property Tag. The Property Book page and book number should then be recorded onto the Property Bag and Property Tag.

The left side of the property book is for the recording officer when the officer comes into possession of the property. The right side of the property book is for station personnel and is used when returning property to the owner.

Any corrections made to the Property Book must be made in red ink. The initials of the person making the correction along with his/her badge number must be written on the corrected entry. When corrections are made to the Property Book, a line in red shall be drawn through the incorrect entry. The

person who made the correction shall affix his or her initials and badge number at either end of the red line.

### **Property Record (PD81)**

The PD81 is the Property Record form. This is used when all property other than prison property is turned over to the Property Division. All property taken into custody should be given to the Station Clerk or the element Property Officer with a completed PD81. There are paper copies of the PD81 available in each station. Members can also download and type the information into the PD81, which is located on the MPD intranet in the MPD Online Forms. It is also helpful to save a copy to your personal N drive.

**NOTE:** This form must be approved by a Lieutenant or above.

### **Continuation Report (PD202A)**

This report is used whenever the narrative portion of the Property Record extends past the available space. It is useful when there is an excessive amount of property involved, or the circumstances require further articulation.

### **Property Released on Scene / District (PD 81A)**

As noted above, it is incumbent upon the MPD member to find the lawful owner upon coming into possession of property. In cases where the owner is found and the property is not needed by MPD, the property can be expeditiously released on scene. The *Property Released on Scene* form (PD81A) allows the officer to do so without having to take the property to his/her element. An entry into the Property Book (PD82), however, is still required. The *Property Released on Scene* (PD81A) is attached to this entry.

### **Property Release (PD81C)**

It is a common occurrence for MPD to take into possession property that is initially thought to be useful as evidence. Sometimes, however, it is determined that this property has no evidentiary value in a criminal case or investigation. In other instances, a disposition for a criminal case has been received and the property will no longer be needed as evidence. In such cases, the initial investigating officer must file a *Property Release* form (PD81C) and forward it to the Property Control Branch. The property will then either be released to its lawful owner or destroyed (example: narcotics). Note that for Suspected Proceeds of a Crime, any requested Property Release form to the investigating member must be completed within five (5) days of notification by an element Property Officer.

### **Property Ownership / Classification Information Card (PD81D)**

Sometimes it becomes apparent that the original classification of property taken by MPD is no longer appropriate. For example, a purse found on a crime scene and taken as Suspected Proceeds of a Crime is discovered to have no evidentiary value. MPD must then change the classification from Suspected Proceeds of a Crime to another, more applicable, one. Sometimes it is reclassified to be Found Property, Abandoned Property, etc. The form that is utilized for such instances is called the *Property Ownership / Classification Information Card* (PD 81D).

In other instances, a recovering officer may discover the identity of the owner/claimant of previously unclaimed Found Property. A *Property Ownership / Classification Information Card* form is completed in this circumstance as well, and the form is forwarded to Property Control Branch via the element Property Officer.

### **Property Receipt (PD 82A)**

3.4 Property

There are occasions when a citizen will turn unclaimed property that he or she found over to MPD. This type of property shall be classified as Found Property. Upon taking possession of unclaimed property, it is MPD policy that the citizen be given a *Property Receipt* (PD82A). A copy of the Property Receipt is placed in a special file at the MPD member's element. This receipt is, of course, in addition to Property Record (PD 81) and Property Book (PD82) entry that is made for the item.

### **3.4.4 Describe the procedures for taking property into departmental custody**

The property record is the centerpiece of the process of taking property into departmental custody. As already noted, with the exception of prisoner's property a Property Record must be completed whenever property is taken into departmental custody. This is in addition to the entry that is must be made in the Property Book as well as any Property Tag or Property Bag/Envelope information that needs to be completed.

When an MPD officer comes into possession of recovered property, he or she should first inspect it. For example, if the officer encounters a wallet, the officer should go through the wallet to look for any identification, money, credit cards, etc. All such contents shall be accounted for when the property is put on the Property Record and the Property Book. Another example can be a backpack or a purse. The same procedure holds true and the bag should be examined for recoverable items. Any weapons, drugs, or other contraband must be dealt with according to departmental procedures.

The officer shall then canvass and otherwise try to notify the owner of any recovered property. Hopefully, identification or other personal effects of the claimant will be found and assist in this effort. If the officer is unable to find the owner of the property, the property must be taken to an MPD district. Depending on the size of the property, it must either be bagged in a Property Bag/Envelope or tagged with a Property Tag.

**NOTE:** Be sure to include the CCN#, owner information (if available), and a thorough listing of the property on the Property Bag and in the Property Book.

The Property Record (PD81) consists of numerous spaces that describe the property and where it was found. Different sections are to be filled out by different MPD personnel.

#### **A. Recording Officer Information**

1. N/A (Filled out by District/Element Property Officer, not recording officer)
2. Receiving Element - 1D, 2D, 3D..., NSID, etc.)
3. Property Book & Page Number
4. CCN - 15-123456Page 1 of 2, or 3,4,5 for page number
5. No. of Items listed below - How many items are going to the property division that are listed on this PD81.
6. No of Associates - How many people involved? Owner, Finder etc...
7. N/A (Filled out by District/Element Property Officer at a later date)
8. N/A (Filled in by Property Clerk)
9. Name of member recovering Property (Your name and badge number) may be different from box 10



10. N/A at time of submission

B. Part 1 - Description of Property

1. Date recovered - The date the officer is putting the information in the Property Book and submitting the PD81. The date the officer comes into contact with the property.
2. Where was property found? - Location the property was recovered

Classification section:

1. Abandoned
2. Turned Over to Police for Destruction
3. Suspected Proceeds of Crime
4. Estate of Deceased
5. Evidence
6. Found
7. Safekeeping - Recovered Stolen Auto
8. Held for Civil Forfeiture
9. Impounded
10. Removed from Impounded Vehicle
11. Set Out for Eviction
12. Prisoner's Property
13. Alleged Mentally Ill
  - a. Item No - Given to each individual item entered on the PD81 (1-5, continue onto another PD81 if more than 5, 6-10, etc.) Indicate page numbers in box between boxes 4 and 5. I.e. 1 of 2 or 2 of 2.
  - b. Description of Item: Give a brief description of the property. Do not give value when value is unknown (i.e. say yellow bracelet instead of gold, or shiny grey instead of silver), and note if broken before taken into police custody (I.e. Apple iPhone with cracked screen)
  - c. Color
  - d. Serial Number
  - e. Classification - Choose from the above list and mark with the appropriate letter
  - f. Quantity: How many? Do not use this if they are different (i.e. two cell phones should be recorded separately with different serial numbers, however 25 clear zip should be listed once with a quantity of 25).

The Following sections are to be completed by the reporting officer:

1. Part II - Motor Vehicles Impounded or in Custody: Self - explanatory, fill in fields where appropriate
2. Part III - Description of Firearms - Self - explanatory, fill in fields where appropriate

Special Notes for filling out a Property Record Form (PD 81)

- 1: Model # of weapon can be found on the slide of newer semi-automatic handguns and on the frame of most revolvers.
  - 2: Number of shots should indicate magazine capacity of semi-automatic or cylinder capacity of revolvers NOT the actual amount of cartridges in the firearm at the time of recovery.
  - 3: The officer turning over the property to either Station Clerk or the District/Element Property Officer should ensure the property has been signed for on the Property Book (PD82) by the station clerk or property before turning it over to them.
3. Part IV - Court Disposition: Completed by attorney
  4. Part V - Property Ownership/Claim Information

- a. Item Nos - This corresponds with the item in question listed in Part 1, Section A, Item #
  - b. Type of Associate: Owner (O), Claimant (C), Dependent (D), Lienholder (L), and Finder (F), displayed at the top. This corresponds with the item number
  - c. Name of Associate - Last, First
  - d. Address: #, Street, City, State, Zip
  - e. Social Security Number (if necessary)
  - f. Telephone Number
  - g. Charge (If applicable)
  - h. Arrest No. (If applicable)
  - i. Disposition (If applicable)
5. Part VI - Statement of Facts
- a. The narrative of the PD81 should include the circumstances by which MPD has come into possession of the listed property. The chain-of-custody for the property must also be included here.

The Property Book must also be completed with the requisite CCN#, Officer Name, the classification of the property, etc. A good description of the property being taken should also be written. Be sure to note the space where the element Property Officer or Station Clerk signs to acknowledge receipt of the property from the recovering member. Once complete, the Property Record (PD81) is ready for the lieutenant's signature. All Property Records must be approved by a lieutenant or above prior to listing items in the Property Book and giving them to the Property Clerk.

### **3.4.5 Describe a found property investigation**

A common situation that MPD members will encounter is a Found Property investigation. Although not one of the more involved of MPD member tasks, its importance is readily apparent. As covered earlier in this lesson, the safeguarding of property is one of the most important functions of the Metropolitan Police Department. Suppose a community member presents an MPD member with property that has been found on the sidewalk. What steps must be taken? First, the MPD member must be diligent to safeguard the property. Then, the MPD member must investigate the circumstances that led to the property being found. Is it possible evidence of a crime? Was the property damaged? These are all part of a Found Property investigation. This type of investigation is recorded in the member's notebook before any departmental paperwork is initiated.

Upon being presented with Found Property, it is required that the MPD member give the citizen who found it the original of a Property Receipt (PD82A), described above. The MPD officer will turn over the form copy to his or her respective element. MPD officers should always have *Found Property* forms available for such scenarios. Please note that the Property Receipt does not infer any right to the property to the finder.

The MPD officer must then complete an Incident Report and Property Record and record an entry in the Property Book. Note that in most instances, the Property Receipt will have its Property Book entry information updated at the element. All of these tasks must be completed prior to the conclusion of the member's tour of duty.

It is however, required of the member to attempt to locate the owner of the recovered property. If this can be conveniently accomplished on the original scene, the MPD officer will obtain a signature on the *Property Released on Scene* form (PD81A). A lieutenant or above must approve of any property released

on the original scene. Satisfactory proof of ownership is required in order to release any property. If property is released on the scene, such a scenario must be articulated in the Incident Report (PD251). The MPD officer must still respond to the element complete the Property Record and Incident Report and to the property into the Property Book.

The *Property Released on Scene* form is stapled to the Property Book entry. MPD requires that officers write “**RETURNED ON SCENE**” in bold red lettering across the *Property Released on Scene* form when doing. If the property was not returned on the scene, MPD officers must continue to reasonably attempt to find the owner of the property. If the owner is not found by the end of his or her tour of duty, the member must inform the Station Clerk who will then attempt to notify the owner. If there is still no owner found, the responsibility for the item ultimately falls upon the element Property Officer.

Remember that Found Property scenarios typically require Property Receipts and Property Released on Scene forms. This is in addition to the mandatory Property Record, Property Book entry, and Incident Report.

There are exceptions to the above procedure when encountering Found Property. For example, if the property is found inside a DC Taxicab Commission-licensed vehicle, the MPD officer must first follow the above procedures with the addition of making a notification to the DC Taxicab Commission. The notification must detail the property found. Additionally, the Incident Report must include the notification details, including the name of the person notified as well as when the notification was made.

If the Found Property was encountered on a Metrorail train or parking lot, the property must be turned over to a WMATA employee. The WMATA employee will then give the MPD officer a receipt. If the property is found on a WMATA bus, the bus driver will be given the property. Again, MPD officer will be given a receipt. Both types of property receipts must be given to the officer’s element Station Clerk. An Incident Report, Property Book entry, and Property Record is still required. The narratives on these forms will indicate that the property was turned over to Metro-Transit.

**NOTE:** Whenever taking property into the possession of the department, the recovering member must complete a Property Record, Incident Report and Property Book entry every time. When the Property Record is complete, it must be approved by a lieutenant or above. The Property Record will have a corresponding log in the Property Book. Every MPD member must be able to execute such tasks flawlessly. As has been mentioned earlier, there are few more important tasks that an MPD member will handling than the safeguarding of property.

### **Summary**

By the end of this lesson, recruits should become adept at taking possession of different types of property and properly completing the corresponding paperwork and processing tasks. This lesson builds on the good notebook habits, basic investigative skills, and report writing abilities learned in prior lessons. It is imperative that an MPD member be able to safeguard and properly classify and process property.