

From the Pages of The Evidence Log

The Storage of Handguns

By Steve Berdrow

In my 25 plus years in law enforcement, I have seen many different ways of storing hand guns for evidence purposes. Because of their various sizes and shapes, it is difficult to find one system that works well for all.

Our primary consideration is to protect the evidentiary value of the weapon. This means protecting it from incidental damage during storage, and storing it where it can be found when needed for court. It obviously includes such things as avoiding storing it in plastic, which promotes rusting, and we should probably do all this as space-efficiently as possible.

At the Burbank Police Department's Property Section, we have solved this storage problem by using standardized commercial gun boxes that are manufactured specifically for the storage of handguns, long - guns, and knives. They are of rugged cardboard construction, sized to fit most firearms, store easily on shelves, and are inexpensive. As you can see in the photo, we built shelves that just fit the boxes to avoid wasted space, and the temptation to stack other property on the boxes. This creates an easily accessed storage system that is very easily managed. The boxes protect the weapon, and they also have room for magazines, holsters, etc.

We attach 3 X 5 cards that have the Evidence Tag Number and the Item Bar Codes to the boxes. The cards themselves are color coded by year. That assists in making the audit and inventory procedures run smoothly, and the boxes are reusable, making them even more economical. In addition, the boxes are great for transporting weapons to and from court and the crime lab, both in protecting the weapon and keeping it out of public's direct view. The box is also supplied with small holes on the back side, which makes it possible for a crime scene investigator to secure the weapon to the box using small wire ties.

When designing the shelves for the handgun boxes, remember that you must select the container (box) first, and then design the shelf around the box. Make sure there is room to grab the top of the box, but no wasted space above boxes or on the sides. Never stack the boxes, stand them on end only one high. If you stack them, you make retrieval more labor intensive. Arrange them so that any box can be removed without disturbing another one.