THE ARIZONA ASSOCIATION FOR PROPERTY AND EVIDENCE

LOCK AND KEY

Summer 2009

QUARTERLY MEETINGS

The sites for the September 2009, December 2009, and March 2010 quarterly meetings are set. The host agencies are:

September 9, 2009

Mesa Police Department.

- Lane Darling is the contact.

December 9, 2009

Phoenix Police Department

- Sandie Imberi is the contact.

March 10, 2010

Tucson Police Department

- Nancy McKay-Hills is the contact.

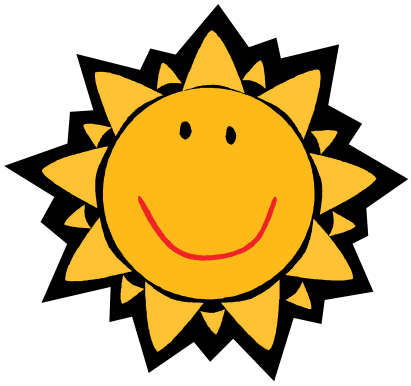
Directions will be given prior to each meeting on the AAPE website (azape.org).

Remember, all of our quarterly meetings are scheduled for the 2nd Wednesday of March, September, and December.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

It has been a long time coming, but you are now reading a new edition of Lock and Key, the AAPE newsletter. Since the last issue, we have a new President of the United States, a new Governor for the State of Arizona, and the economy has been taking a beating. Many of you are now dealing with staff shortages from hiring freezes, layoffs, and furloughs. Storage space is always an issue for our profession and it doesn't ever go away. When all of these elements are combined, it can be overwhelming. I know each and every one of you is dealing with hardships. All I can recommend is to persevere. Fight for more help, more storage, and new more beneficial laws. I will be battling for the same. Oh, I will also strive to be timelier in the future.

- Bill



SUMMER

"Life is not about waiting for the storms to pass... it's about learning how to dance in the rain!"

- Vivian Greene

THE ARIZONA ASSOCIATION FOR PROPERTY AND EVIDENCE

LOCK AND KEY

MOVING A PROPERTY & EVIDENCE SECTION
By Bill Brantley

"The Move" was a career event. No one in our Property & Evidence Section had ever experienced such an event of this magnitude and everyone will complete his or her careers without undergoing anything remotely similar. It started many years ago with a realization by our Command Staff that the Tucson Police Department needed to expand and modernize the Property & Evidence Section. Finally, several years later, we are now in our new facility.

The move out of our old facility began in earnest on Saturday, November 1, 2008. The total number of pallets (each pallet held 24 boxes) was 500. This amounted to 12,000 boxes of evidence. The work crew assigned to the old facility placed the cardboard boxes onto pallets and shrink-wrapped them for added security. A manifest was then created and the pallets transported by secured truck to the new facility. A member of Evidence remained with the truck at all times. The pallets were then unloaded and the box contents transferred to the new plastic storage containers. This process took much longer and the incoming pallets were stored throughout the section in any and all areas until they could be broken down and processed. The move took three weeks and the unloading took another three months to complete. Because of continuing contractor work on the refrigerator & freezer units, all bloods, urine, and frozen DNA was not moved at this time. After the contractors completed their work and we were satisfied with the refrigerator & freezer unit's "redundancy" and alarm systems, we moved this last part of our evidence into the building on June 24, 2009. The entire move was completed with minimal impact to normal operations.

Are we done? Not yet. There are still 16 pallets of old evidence that needs research done to

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see if it can be destroyed or if it needs to be transferred to permanent storage. This will be complete by the end of the year. The move has also backlogged us in disposal. Currently we have 17,000 items that are authorized for destruction. Finalizing parts of the move along with injury, illness, and the city mandated hiring freeze, we are left with no one to pull and destroy these items.

What have I learned during this whole process? I have learned patience. No matter how much you prepare, the unexpected will happen. We originally were planning to move into the building in Spring 2007. Because of construction delays, it was about 18 months later. Before, during, and after our move, I spent a large amount of time working with the architect, contractor, and sub-contractors on several items requiring further work. The building is an amazing "state-of-the-art" evidence facility and I am proud of the finished product. Does it have some flaws? Yes, but they are things that were unexpected. After this experience, I realize that a project of this magnitude will always have many challenges.

The saddest part of the experience is seeing the hard work of the Evidence staff go largely unrecognized. The impact to the rest of the department was so minimal, it is impossible for department members to understand the "blood, sweat, and tears" the staff experienced. I do not know if the staff understands the enormity of what they accomplished, but I do and I am very proud of the result. Like I said before, "The Move" was a career event.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

We are still looking for someone to fill the vacant Marketing Director position on the Public Relations Committee. The responsibility of the position is to increase the awareness, advertising, and membership of the organization.

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LOCK AND KEY

"Success is the ability to go from one failure to another with no loss of enthusiasm."

- Sir Winston Churchill

THE 2009 INFLUENZA A H1N1

Currently, there are 1,092 confirmed cases of the new 2009 Influenza A H1N1 strain and 19 deaths identified in Arizona. The symptoms of H1N1 (swine) flu in people are similar to the symptoms of regular human flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting associated with H1N1 (swine) flu. In the past, severe illness (pneumonia and respiratory failure) and deaths have been reported with H1N1 (swine) flu infection in people. Like seasonal flu, H1N1 (swine) flu may cause a worsening of underlying chronic medical conditions.

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ADVERTISING RATES FOR THE LOCK AND KEY

Business card size:
$3.00 once or $10.00 annually

Eighth of a page:
$5.00 once or $18.00 annually

Fourth of a page:
$10.00 once or $35.00 annually

Half a page:
$20.00 once or $70.00 annually

Full page:
$40.00 once or $150.00 annually

Call any AAPE board member to reserve your advertisement in the next edition of the newsletter.

The deadline is the 1st day of January, April, July, and October.

LOCK AND KEY

SAFETY FIRST

"Quick, grab the fire extinguisher…uh, who has the key…"

YOUR HELP IS NEEDED

I am always looking for information for both the website and newsletter. Please send stories, photos, and anything else you think would be of interest to the membership to Bill Brantley, Tucson Police Department, Property & Evidence Section, 270 S. Stone Ave., Tucson, AZ 85701.

The AAPE is always looking for volunteers to work on the different committees created to support the goals of the association. Whether you have a small amount of free time or you are one of the lucky people with plenty of extra time on hand, we have assignments for you. The following committees can use you:

Task Force
Public Relations
- **Newsletter**
- **Web monitor**
- **Marketing**

Good and Welfare
Training
Legislature

Contact any committee chairman to see how you can help. Every minute of donated help is valuable to us.

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THE 2009 INFLUENZA A H1N1

Germs can be spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth. Droplets from a cough or sneeze of an infected person move through the air. Germs can be spread when a person touches respiratory droplets from another person on a surface like a desk, for example, and then touches their own eyes, mouth or nose before washing their hands.

There are everyday actions that can help prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses like influenza. Take these everyday steps to protect your health:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective. The recommended wash time is 15 to 20 seconds.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you get sick with influenza, CDC recommends that you stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.
- Drink plenty of fluids and eat nutritious food.
- Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, and manage your stress.

For more information on H1N1 flu virus, go to Flu.gov on the Internet. It contains the information from this article and much more. Lets stay safe and healthy.

THE PACKAGING AND STORAGE OF EVIDENCE FROM ARSON SCENES

Lisa M. Windsor, Crime Laboratory Coordinator in the Chemical Analysis Section of the Tucson Police Dept. Crime Lab, provided this information for our education.

Fire debris evidence and ignitable liquid evidence have to be placed into an airtight container. The TPD approved airtight containers are metal paint cans and mason jars. The fire debris evidence can be placed in either the metal paint cans or mason jars. The ignitable liquid evidence should only be placed into mason jars. There have been studies 20+ years old recommending these types of airtight containers, which the fire debris community has been following.

Ignitable liquids are a broad category that encompasses flammable liquids, such as acetone or gasoline, and combustible liquids, such as diesel fuel, kerosene, or charcoal lighter fluid. Going into chemistry terms, the ignitable liquids are known as "volatile liquids," which basically means they disappear. Therefore, you have to place this type of evidence into airtight containers to preserve the vapors.

If you place fire debris evidence or ignitable liquids into a paper bag, then it will evaporate and seep through the paper bag and disappear. By the time a lab analyst can perform their analysis, the evidence essentially will have vanished. The same is also true for plastic bags. An additional problem with both paper and plastic bags is the creation of cross-contamination issues as the evaporating liquids permeate other evidence that is around your stored item.

Another concern is the storage of soil samples collected at fire scenes. There are published journal papers documenting the phenomenon of bacteria in the soil that eat away the ignitable liquid. In order to preserve the integrity of the ignitable liquid evidence in soil samples until analysis can be complete, the Tucson Police Department requires that they be frozen. (Please note that this only refers to soil samples. All other fire debris evidence and/or ignitable liquid evidence should be stored in regular flammables storage). Once the lab analyst completes their analysis, the soil sample can be stored in regular flammables storage.

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So that you would have a better understanding what the lab analyst does, let's pretend someone wants to torch his or her house. A lot of people use gasoline. They pour the gasoline in the house, light it on fire and leave. The fire investigator goes to school for training to differentiate between an accidental fire and an arson fire. He/she learns the signs of an arson fire by collecting the burnt carpet, the burnt couch cushion, etc. Anywhere where he/she thinks that a person may have poured gasoline. He/she will collect and package these items into metal paint cans, into mason jars, and in some cases, 5 gallon plastic buckets, when the evidence is too big to fit into the metal paint cans or mason jars.

The lab analyst will then get the evidence and use what's called an Activated Charcoal Strip (ACS) to analyze fire debris evidence. An ACS is placed inside the container and the container is then placed into an oven to heat on a low temperature overnight. The purpose of heating up the container is that as the fire debris evidence is heated, it will form a gaseous vapor and this gaseous vapor is attracted to the ACS. So it will adhere onto or stick onto the ACS. Remember, ignitable liquids are volatile. In other words, if there are any ignitable liquids trapped within the fire debris such as burnt carpet, then as it is heated it will form a gaseous vapor. The next day, the container is taken out of the oven and cooled. Once cooled the ACS is placed into a small vial made especially for the instrument used to analyze this evidence. This instrument is called a Gas Chromatograph-Mass Spectrometer (GC/MS). A solvent is put into the small vial, and now whatever is on that ACS strip is extracted out or seeped out into the solvent. It is this solvent that actually gets analyzed by the GC/MS. The lab analyst can tell whether gasoline was used, or some other ignitable liquid.

For further reading on this subject, Lisa recommends the following books and guidelines.

- ✓ Fire Debris Analysis by Stauffer, Dolan, and Newman
- ✓ Kirk's Fire Investigation by John DeHaan
- ✓ American Society for Testing and Materials ASTM 1618 specifically section 14, volume 14.02
- ✓ NFPA Guide for Fire and Explosion Investigations

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