

The identification and recovery of evidence items at a claim scene is an integral aspect of any forensic investigation. The integrity and continuity of evidence items must be ensured. It must be confirmed that no interference, addition or loss of material could have either deliberately or accidentally taken place through careful documentation and tracking of evidence items.

Items of evidence commonly encountered include fire debris, electrical appliances, paperwork, pipework and fittings, CCTV and alarm systems.

Items may be damaged or intact and care must be taken to preserve them in the condition in which they are found. Further examination in a laboratory or with investigators representing other parties may be required at a later date.

Comparison or exemplar samples should also be recovered from the scene if available.

HINTS AND TIPS

- Minimise damage to scene/alteration of the scene.
- Do not remove any items from the scene if it can be avoided.
- Do not move any items within the scene.
- If necessary, protect fragile items. For example, items left outside can be covered with a tarpaulin or moved to a sheltered place if required, providing that further damage or contamination is not caused.
- Encourage others to leave the scene as is, do not clean up before your forensics arrive.
- Gather all available documentation and request documentation not available at the time of inspection.



Recovery of carpet sample for ignitable liquid residue analysis

The packaging of evidence items in the correct manner should be undertaken to prevent:

1. Contamination – e.g. correct packing of fire debris to be tested for ignitable liquid residues to prevent cross contamination from other samples.
2. Damage – e.g. delicate items should be packaged to protect them in the correct containers e.g. fire damaged electrical cables.
3. Degradation – e.g. items which have been exposed to water should be allowed to dry out before long term storage.

IFIC Forensics' investigators follow best practice procedures as set out in the company's internal 'Guide for the Collection of Evidence', which details the process for the handling of evidence items from identification and recovery through packaging, storage and ultimately disposal.



Types of evidence containers