

## INFORMATION ALERT ~ FIRE/ARSON INVESTIGATION UNITS

**FIRE DEBRIS EVIDENCE COLLECTION  
QUALITY ASSURANCE BULLETIN**

The OFPC Arson Bureau in conjunction with the New York State Police Forensic Investigation Center are publishing this technical advisory as a means to support fire investigation teams and evidence specialists by underscoring special considerations as related to the collection of fire debris evidence.

As a means of protecting the fire debris evidence sample;

- NEVER use a metal can to collect evidence which exhibits signs of rust
- Insure PROMPT SUBMISSION for laboratory analysis
  - o Days rather than weeks
- REFRIGERATE OR FREEZE fire debris samples between the time of collection and transport to the forensic laboratory especially those containing soil, foliage or organic materials including those containing human tissue and worn clothing
  - o Refrigeration or freezing has proven successful in facilitating the preservation of the volatile substances as often associated with fire debris samples and preventing microbial degradation of ignitable liquid residue

To prevent container failures and the loss of the evidence;

- Always be aware of manufacturer's specifications for the container to insure it is recommended for use with ignitable liquid fire debris collection
- When using **UN-LINED** metal "paint-type" cans consider following a DOUBLE CANNING technique to maintain sample integrity should the primary container fail from degradation.
  - o Example: Pint in Quart / Quart in Gallon / Any size in Fire Debris Evidence Bag
  - o When Double Canning, place all tape labels and seals as well as all pen markings ONLY on THE OUTER CAN to avoid contamination should the inner evidence can fail
- When using **LINED** metal "paint-type" cans provide the laboratory with a sealed, empty can to establish a control background of each batch of evidence cans
- When using evidence bags for fire debris, insure that their specifications indicate that they are hydrocarbon free and designed for use with fire debris which may contain ignitable liquid residues

For questions regarding this bulletin please contact:



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