



DIGITAL EVIDENCE HANDLING DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC



During the times of COVID-19 pandemic, following controls may be taken to manage the risks involved in the handling of digital evidences by the Law Enforcement Agencies and the Digital Forensics Analysts in the labs.

PROTECT YOURSELF

Before you begin handling the digital devices, protect yourself by

- Cleaning your hands with hand sanitiser / soap and water and wearing disposable gloves
- Wearing protective facemasks and goggles to protect your eyes
- Wearing disposable apron if long term handling of the evidences are required

COLLECTION AND PACKAGING OF DIGITAL EVIDENCE

Before you pack and seal the digital evidences,

- Clean the exterior surfaces of the evidences (eg Mobile Phones, Laptops, computer systems, smart watches, etc.) with disinfectant wipes (Soft lint free microfiber clothes with 70% isopropyl alcohol can be used as wipes or similar disinfectant wipes)
- Wipe all the associated connectors, power chords, etc. with disinfectants

Do not use abrasive materials for wiping

Do not wipe the exposed electronic circuitry with disinfectants

HANDLING DIGITAL EVIDENCES IN THE FORENSICS LAB

- Before unpacking the digital evidences, store the package in a clean, dry and hot place for a minimum of 5 days. (A recent study published in the [New England Journal of Medicine](#), says that SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, is viable for up to 72 hours on plastics, 48 hours on stainless steel, 24 hours on cardboard, and 4 hours on copper).
- If Ultra Violet chambers are available, disinfect the package and all the devices
- Clean the exterior surfaces of all the individual devices with disinfectant wipes as mentioned
- The pieces of equipment and the connectors used in the forensics lab for imaging, analysing etc. have also to be wiped with disinfectants after usage.

REMOVING PROTECTIVE MEASURES

Once the digital evidence handling is completed,

- Remove and dispose the gloves without contaminating the hands
- Perform hand hygiene with sanitiser or soap and water
- Remove the protective eye wares and face masks. Avoid touching the front of the goggle / face mask
- Again perform hand hygiene with sanitiser or soap and water
- Remove the disposable aprons if you are wearing the same
- Once again perform hand hygiene with sanitiser or soap and water

Care should be taken to dispose the removed items in proper garbage handling methods