



## County of Santa Clara

Policy Name: Found Property (Cash or Item of Value)

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**Policy Type:** Administrative

**Category:** Facilities

**Policy Name:** Found Property (Cash or Item of Value)

**Policy Owner:** County Executive

### **Policy Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to ensure the secure storage, documentation and disposition of money or property found at County facilities and on County property. This policy provides instructions for what to do if County employees find lost cash or property at a County facility, procedures for the proper documentation and storage of found property, and what to do if the rightful owner does not claim the property.

### **Policy Summary**

County facility managers generally shall serve as the facility custodian charged with documenting and storing found property under this policy. The primary department occupying a County facility may elect to designate another County employee as the facility custodian at the department head's discretion.

Each County department shall designate an employee to be a liaison to the facility custodian of found cash or property of value. The departmental liaison shall turn over all found property to the facility custodian. The facility custodian will temporarily store the item in a secure manner for a period of 90 days.



When taking possession of found property, the facility custodian must make a good-faith effort to reasonably estimate the value of the property and identify the rightful owner of the property. Reasonable estimates can be determined by the facility custodian's personal experience and opinion, researching the value of similar property online, or polling co-workers familiar with the value of the property.

### Procedures

#### Taking Possession of and Disposing of Found Property

- 1) An **employee** who finds lost property or receives found property from a member of the public shall take possession of it. If the property was found by a member of the general public, the **employee** should record that person's name and contact information if that information is known.
- 2) Upon taking possession of the found property, the **employee** shall deliver it to his or her department's designated liaison to the facility custodian of lost property and provide a description of when and where the property was found, if that information is known.
- 3) The **departmental liaison** will contact the facility custodian, with a description of when and where the property was found, and deliver the found property to the facility custodian.
- 4) The **facility custodian** will make a good-faith effort to reasonably estimate the value of the property and shall document each of the following, if that information is known:
  - A description of the property;
  - The location where the property was found;



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- The date and time when the property was found;
- The name (and address, if found by a non-employee) of the individual who found the property; and
- The custodian's reasonable estimate of the property's value.

This information shall be kept by the facility custodian for at least 90 days after the property is returned to its rightful owner, delivered to law enforcement, or deposited with the appropriate County fund or department, as outlined below.

- 5) The **facility custodian** shall make reasonable efforts to identify the rightful owner of the property.
  - 5a) If the identity of the owner of the property is ascertainable, the **facility custodian** shall attempt to notify the owner that the property was found, and provide instructions for the retrieval of the property if possible.
  - 5b) If the identity of the owner of the property is not ascertainable, and the facility custodian is contacted by an individual who claims ownership of the found property, the **facility custodian** shall only turn over the property to the claimant if satisfactory proof of ownership is presented. Proof of ownership may include a driver's license or a County employee ID badge, along with an accurate description of the property and the approximate time and location where it was lost.
- 6) If the owner of the property is unknown or if the property remains unclaimed for more than 90 days since being turned over to the facility custodian, the property shall be disposed of in the following manner:



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- 6a) If the value of the property is estimated to be *one hundred dollars (\$100) or more, or if the item is of a personal nature*, the **facility custodian** shall turn the property and the record of its discovery over to the law enforcement agency with jurisdiction over the location where the property was found.

Examples of items worth \$100 or more include:

- Laptop computers
- Smartphones or tablets
- Jewelry

Examples of items that are personal in nature:

- Prescription glasses
- Car or house keys
- Medications

- 6b) If the value of the property is estimated to be *less than one hundred dollars (\$100)*, the **facility custodian** shall attempt to contact the individual who found it and provide them the opportunity to claim the property.

Examples of items in this category include:

- Sunglasses
- Clothing



If the individual who found the property cannot be contacted, or refuses to take possession of the item, the **facility custodian** shall deposit the property into the General Fund if it is cash, or transfer the property to the Procurement Department as surplus County property if it is physical property.

### Definitions

- 1) **"Facility Custodian"** means the facility manager or other employee designated at each County facility as the individual to temporarily hold found property. The facility manager may also delegate his or her responsibilities under this policy to another staff member.

If the facility is managed by an outside entity or contractor, or if the facility does not have a facility manager, the department(s) occupying the facility shall designate a County employee as the facility custodian.

- 2) **"Lost Property"** or **"Found Property"** means any cash or personal property seemingly lost or abandoned by its rightful owner on County property or in a County facility. "Found Property" shall not include:
  - Weapons or dangerous items – Individuals finding weapons or dangerous items should immediately contact law enforcement.
  - Illegal or suspicious property, such as illegal drugs, cash in a paper bag, or other suspicious item – Individuals finding such items should immediately contact law enforcement.
  - Animals – Individuals should call the County Department of Animal Care and Control regarding all animals found on County property or in a County facility, even those not located in unincorporated areas.



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- Perishable goods – Anything that will mold, spoil, damage the surrounding environment, or attract pests, including liquids, may be immediately disposed of or destroyed.
- 3) **“Personal in Nature”** means items that are of little value except to the item’s original owner, or items that may jeopardize the original owner’s security, privacy, or personal information, if given to another individual. Examples of items that are personal in nature include:
- Prescription glasses
  - Car or house keys
  - Medications
- 4) **“Property”** may include cash, personal or physical property, or both.

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### 1) **How should I estimate the value of a piece of property?**

Use your best judgment to make a good-faith estimate of the property’s value. Some suggestions for methods for making good-faith estimates include:

- Using your personal experience and opinion;
- Researching the value of similar property online; or
- Polling co-workers familiar with the value of the property.



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### Related Policies

- Unclaimed Money - <https://saecommon.sccgov.org/countypolicy/Unclaimed-Money.pdf>

### Related Forms and Information

None.

### History

Date	Changes Made
5/18/2015	Policy uploaded. (John Myers)