

## ROYAL MAIL GROUP SECURITY - PROCEDURES &amp; STANDARDS

SEARCHING	P&S Doc. 7-X
1. PURPOSE.	
Conducting searches is a fundamental part of criminal investigations. The purpose of this document is to specify the required Procedures & Standards for all Investigators within the Royal Mail Group.	
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2. INTRODUCTION.	
2.1 Investigators within Royal Mail Group have no statutory power to conduct searches without the appropriate consent as described at Section 3 below. The possibility of any misapprehension by a suspected offender, the Police or indeed any other person, in this respect must be avoided.	
2.2 Any search which is carried out in England & Wales, as part of a criminal investigation, must be conducted in accordance with the Police & Criminal Evidence Act 1984. Investigators must ensure that they have a thorough understanding of the legislation, in particular Code B of the 'PACE' - Codes of Practice.	
2.3 Searches carried out in Northern Ireland shall be in accordance with the Police & Criminal Evidence Order 1986.	
2.4 Searches carried out in Scotland shall be in accordance with Common Law.	
2.5 Irrespective of the area of legal jurisdiction in which a search is carried out, Investigators are required to complete the relevant Group Security documentation as described at Section 7 below.	
2.6 Investigators will conduct themselves in a professional and courteous manner, demonstrating consideration and respect for other persons and property (i.e. to prevent other people in the office or house from taking offence to what must be a disagreeable procedure for them, or to preclude the risk of neighbours getting to know what is going on).	

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- 2.7 There are no grounds for damaging or destroying property during the course of the searches. If existing damage is observed during a search, consideration should be given to making a written record using the relevant form GS005c - Record of Search, and/or taking a photograph of the affected area.
- 2.8 It is also important that the area and the nature of search are completely proportionate to the loss being investigated and that all aspects of the search can be justified.

[Back to contents](#)**3. CONSENT: and/or REFUSAL TO SEARCH.**

- 3.1 In the absence of a search warrant (See 3.9 below) an Investigator may search a suspected offender, their home or private motor vehicle **only** if that person's consent has been obtained. Investigators must ensure that the suspect is in a position to give consent to any proposed search.
- 3.2 Before seeking consent to carry out a search, the Investigator must state the purpose and extent of the proposed search as specifically as possible, i.e. the evidence being sought and the extent to which the person, premises or vehicle etc. will be searched. (PACE Code B 5.2)
- 3.3 Investigators are not permitted to conduct any search for which consent was given under duress or withdrawn before the search is completed. See 3.8 below.
- 3.4 Using the form GS005 - Consent to Search, the Investigator must ensure that the Interviewee fully understands the questions therein and appends their reply in the space provided. It is good practice from an evidential perspective to complete the consent documentation whilst the interview is being recorded. In any event consent must be obtained and documented before the search takes place.
- 3.5 Consent should also be obtained for a search of the personal locker but, if declined, the official locker can be searched on the basis that is the property of our Business. See Section 11 below.
- 3.6 Care should be taken not to go beyond the limits of the consent given. To do so could result in challenges under the Human Rights Act. For example, to search the whole house when the suspect is a young person living with his parents may be excessive. Similarly to search the bedrooms of the suspects children might be unreasonable and subject to challenge. Unless of course, there is reasonable suspicion that evidence, such as stolen property, may be hidden there.
- 3.7 In normal circumstances the suspect should be present at all searches. If, however, the person concerned refuses to be present when a search is conducted he should make this clear when completing the GS005, and in addition, provide a separate note in his own writing giving permission for the search to take place. The Investigator can then present this note as necessary to anyone who is entitled to see it. As a precaution, it is advisable to preserve the note as evidence. See Section 11 in respect of official lockers.

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- 3.8 **Interviewee Refuses or Withdraws Consent to Search**  
Investigators have no power to search persons or premises without consent.

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In some circumstances an Interviewee will ask what will happen if consent to search is not given. Such situations need to be handled with care and diplomacy so as to avoid any inference at a later stage that the consent was given under duress. It is advisable to explain to the Interviewee that the Investigator would prefer to carry out the search with consent in order to continue with the investigation. The question of consent should be posed again with the reply being recorded on the GS005. An ambiguous answer should be treated as a refusal to give consent.

- 3.9 If the interviewee continues to decline a search and there is reason to think that property is outstanding, the question of making an arrest will arise. Provided the Investigator has the necessary power of arrest, consideration should be given to arresting the interviewee at the end of the interview. Once the suspect is under police arrest, the police are permitted to carry out searches under the provisions of the Police & Criminal Evidence Act S18 or 32 as appropriate.
- 3.10 In circumstances whereby an Interviewee withdraws their consent to carry out any search, or part of a search, the same principles apply as outlined at 3.8 and 3.9 above.
- 3.11 Unless the withdrawal of consent to the search takes place during a taped interview, a written record should be made either in the notes of interview, the GS005 or in a notebook of the withdrawal of consent. A search cannot commence or continue once consent has been withdrawn. The interviewee may consent only to a partial search, for instance of certain rooms only, in which case, only these areas can be searched unless the necessary police assistance is obtained.
- 3.12 Section 11.2 below provides guidance in the event of a suspect declining or withdrawing consent to search an official locker.

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#### 4. GROUNDS TO CARRY OUT SEARCHES.

- 4.1 Before a search is conducted or a search warrant is applied for, there must exist reasonable grounds for thinking that the person has committed an offence and is in possession of stolen property. This may include any document, or article, which would be evidence of the offence for which the person is suspected.

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#### 5. POWERS TO CARRY OUT SEARCHES.

- 5.1 As discussed above, RMG Investigators have no statutory power to conduct searches without the appropriate consent.
- 5.2 In some circumstances it may be appropriate to consider applying for a search warrant. This should be discussed with a Senior Investigation Manager within the Unit wherever possible before further action is taken.
- 5.3 Applications for search warrants are addressed through the Police who will both make the application and execute any necessary searches. The Police must also be reminded that RMG Investigators have no statutory power of search without consent.
- 5.4 Under Section 16(2) of PACE, RMG Investigators can be named on a search warrant allowing them to accompany and advise Police Officers and enter

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premises without obtaining the consent of the occupier. Investigators named on the warrant may conduct searching and seizures as long as that person is in the company of a constable.

- 5.5 Under Sections 18 and 32 of PACE, Police Officers can enter and search premises without a warrant. Investigators accompanying Police Officers may search under the supervision of the Police Officer in charge who will introduce the Investigators and explain their role in the search. Investigators should carry identification for production on request (PACE Code B 6.5 ii). An Investigator cannot seize any property during the course of a search conducted under these powers. The seizure of any property must be done by the Police Officers.

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## 6. HEALTH & SAFETY.

- 6.1 Investigators must exercise extreme vigilance and common sense whilst conducting searches of any kind. The health and safety of all persons involved is of paramount importance.
- 6.2 The Procedures & Standards in relation to the core hazards and risks associated with Investigation specific duties can be found on the GSD under the Health & Safety section - Investigation Duties - Hazards & Risks.
- 6.3 Investigators are expected to be fully aware of these 'Controls and Measures', which must be applied and/or managed through a risk assessment approach.
- 6.5 In some circumstances, an Investigator may not consider it necessary to conduct a search for the purpose of recovering property, however, wishes to conduct a search for Health and Safety reasons. For example - before conveying a suspected offender in a motor vehicle. Whilst such a search is not carried out under the provisions of 'PACE', the person concerned must give consent. It is advisable to make a written record of the fact, preferably in an official notebook, that a search was conducted and that the person consented. Because a search of this type is not under the provisions of 'PACE', the GS005 should not be used for this record.
- 6.4 It is possible that, during a search of this nature, the Investigator encounters evidence that could reasonably be suspected as stolen, or otherwise significant to the enquiry. In such circumstances, the suspected offender should be cautioned and reminded of his legal rights in accordance with PACE. A written record of the facts must be made, preferably in an official notebook and signed by those present.

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## 7. DOCUMENTATION - COMPLETION GUIDELINES

- 7.1 GS005 - Interviewees Declaration/Consent to Search (for completion by Interviewee)  
GS005a - Person Entitled to Grant Entry to Vehicle (If other than Interviewee)  
GS005b - Person Entitled to Grant Entry to Premises (If other than Interviewee)  
In each of these 3 forms, the Investigator may complete Part 1 if preferred. Part 2 consists of self explanatory questions to which the Interviewee, or person entitled to grant entry, should be invited to append their reply in the space provided before signing and dating the document. Any questions

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which do not apply may be scored through and N/A written in the 'reply' box. Space is provided at the bottom of the form to enable the Investigator to comment if it is felt necessary. Such comment may include details of any friend or neighbour requested etc.

**7.2 GS005c - Record of Search**

A separate record detailing each search must be completed. Part 4 may be used to record details of any significant occurrence during, or relating to the search in question.

**7.3 GS005d - Record of Property Seized During Search**

Sufficient detail to properly identify the search to which this form relates should be entered in the blank box at the top of the form. The 'Entry No' should reflect a chronological record of order in which the 'recording officer' made the record. See also Section 13 below - Property Recovered During Searches.

- 7.4 Important** - The Q&As sections of the GS005d may be used if necessary to record any questions put to the suspected person during the search. It is imperative that these questions do not constitute an interview and as such must be asked solely for the purpose of furthering the proper and effective conduct of a search. For example, questions to discover the occupier of specified premises, to find a key to open a locked drawer or cupboard or to otherwise seek co-operation during the search or to determine if a particular item is liable to be seized. If questioning goes beyond what is necessary for this purpose, the exchange is likely to constitute an interview as defined by Code C of the PACE Codes of Practice, and would require the associated conditions. Those parties concerned must sign any such questions and replies.

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**8. SEARCHING A PERSON.**

- 8.1** Wherever feasible Investigators must plan operations to ensure that an officer of the same gender as the suspect is available to carry out personal searches. If this is not possible, in order to provide a safeguard against an allegation of misconduct, arrangements should be made for a supervisor of the same sex to attend as a witness.
- 8.2** An Investigator of the opposite gender may, if necessary, conduct a search of the outer garments (coat, jacket, gloves, headgear, shoes). However, a person of the same sex must conduct a search requiring 'patting down' or the removal of anything other than outer clothing. In such cases a person of the opposite sex can only be present if the person searched specifically consents. A record must be made of this consent. (PACE Codes of Practice, Code A, 3.6)
- 8.3** If exceptionally a person of the same sex is not available the Investigator should consider contacting the Police for assistance or asking the suspect to attend a Police Station on a voluntary basis.
- 8.4 Important** - Investigators are reminded of the limitations, described at 7.4 above in relation to questions put to a person during a search.

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**9. SEARCHING VEHICLES.**

- 9.1** The PACE Act, Codes of Practice, Code B, 2.3 determines that a 'vehicle'

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falls within the definition of 'premises' for the purpose of this code. Investigators are therefore reminded that, a) consent to search a vehicle can only be given by the owner, or person entitled to grant entry to the vehicle in question, and b) that person must be given a copy of the Notice of Powers and Rights (GS004).

- 9.2 Important - Investigators are reminded of the limitations, described at 7.4 above in relation to questions put to a person during a search.

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#### 10. SEARCHING PREMISES.

- 10.1 A Notice of Powers and Rights (GS004) must be handed to the owner/occupier, which fully explains the conditions of the search. The time at which the 'notice' was given is to be recorded on the appropriate 'consent' forms.
- 10.2 It is important that any search of premises must be conducted at a reasonable hour.
- 10.3 Important - Investigators are reminded of the limitations, described at 7.4 above in relation to questions put to a person during a search.

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#### 11. SEARCHING OFFICIAL LOCKERS.

- 11.1 Official lockers are provided to some RMG employees for the purpose of housing personal effects. Consent to search an official locker should be sought from the employee concerned and recorded on the GS005.
- 11.2 In the event of this consent being refused or withdrawn by the suspected offender, and it is considered essential that a search must be made, permission to use that particular locker may be formally withdrawn from the key holder. The contents of the locker should then be removed in the presence of a reliable and independent witness. This may be a Manager or Union Representative.
- 11.3 Withdrawing permission to use an official locker should only be considered in circumstances when the facts can fully justify it.
- 11.4 Investigators should ascertain whether a suspected member of staff has an official locker and its number. In some offices, it is not unusual for employees to have unofficial use of additional lockers. This may be determined from either the official records held locally, or discreet enquiries.
- 11.5 Important - Investigators are reminded of the limitations, described at 7.4 above in relation to questions put to a person during a search.

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#### 12. FRIENDS PRESENT DURING SEARCHES.

- 12.1 RMG employees must be offered the 'presence of a friend' at all interviews and searches conducted by RMG Investigators. Irrespective of whether or not the Interviewee opted to have a friend present during an interview, the offer of the 'presence of a friend' must be made in respect of each search.
- 12.2 As described on the form GS003, the 'friend' must be at least 18 years of age and not already involved in the inquiry.

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- 12.3 It is important to remember that the offer of the 'presence of a friend' at both the interview and the 'person' search is a RMG requirement only. The PACE Codes of Practice, Code B, 6.11, determines that a friend, neighbour or other person must be allowed to witness the search of premises (which includes vehicles).
- 12.4 Such requests may be declined by the Investigator if there are reasonable grounds to believe that the presence of the person would unreasonably delay the search, hinder the investigation or endanger anyone. Either way the Investigator must record the reason and the grounds for this decision on the appropriate search documentation.

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- 13.1 Any property seized during a search is likely to become significant evidence. Failure to comply with the correct procedures may result in the evidence being invalid as part of any later proceedings. Investigators must ensure that they are fully conversant with the PACE Code B, 7 refers to the seizure and retention of property.
- 13.2 The Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001 Part 2, provides for circumstances whereby it is necessary to seize large volumes of material for later sifting. (PACE Code B, 7.7 to 7.13 refer).
- 13.3 As described at section 7.3 above, any item of property seized/recovered during a search shall be recorded using a form GS005d - Record of Property Seized During Search. During joint operations with the Police or other organisations, their equivalent documentation may be utilised.
- 13.4 Further guidance concerning the handling of evidence and managing exhibits can be found under the appropriate section of the GSD.

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- 14.1 The purpose of this procedure is to offer apologies and thanks to an innocent member of staff who has cooperated during an enquiry, by consenting to be searched.
- 14.2 The procedure should not be used in circumstances involving an employee who is suspended from duty immediately after the search, or is handed into custody.
- 14.3 Using the draft wording detailed on the GS027, the Investigator should arrange for a letter to be prepared and signed by the appropriate local Manager before it is passed to the employee concerned. In borderline cases it is recommended that the Investigator should be more inclined to give the declaration rather than to withhold it. If you are in doubt consult your Manager.
- 14.4 A copy of the letter signed by the local manager should be retained in the case papers.

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