

**EVIDENCE DISAPPEARS WITHIN HOURS. START THIS LIST NOW. NOT TOMORROW.**

| DATE COMPLETED                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | MATTER / SITUATION DESCRIPTION (FOR YOUR REFERENCE ONLY) | TIME COMPLETED |
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| <div> <div>01 Digital Evidence</div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> Screenshot every relevant email, text, and online communication with the <b>date, timestamp, and sender information visible</b> in the frame.<br/>A screenshot that crops out the timestamp is almost worthless as evidence.           <input type="checkbox"/> Turn off <b>auto-delete on voicemail</b> immediately. Save all relevant messages. Many carriers delete voicemail after 14-30 days automatically.           <input type="checkbox"/> Forward or export important emails to a <b>personal account you fully control</b>, separate from any work or shared account.<br/>If access is revoked, those emails are gone.           <input type="checkbox"/> Screenshot social media posts, comments, and messages <b>before they can be edited or deleted</b>.<br/>Capture the full URL in the screenshot.           <input type="checkbox"/> Check cloud sync and <b>auto-deletion settings</b> on all relevant accounts. Cloud sync can delete a file from all devices if someone deletes it from one.           <input type="checkbox"/> Back up all relevant digital files to a <b>separate drive or cloud account that only you control</b>. Do this before any access is restricted.           <input type="checkbox"/> Save call logs and <b>caller ID records</b>. Screenshot your call history from your phone now, before it scrolls off or the device is replaced.         </div> </div> |                                                          |                |
| <div> <div>02 Physical Evidence</div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Photograph before touching.</b> Wide shot showing context and location, then close-up of the item itself. Every relevant item, even if it seems minor.           <input type="checkbox"/> Photograph any <b>injuries, property damage, or relevant conditions</b> immediately. Injuries change. Conditions get repaired. Document them now.<br/>Include a timestamp object (newspaper, phone screen with date) in the frame if possible.           <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Do not clean, alter, repair, or move</b> anything that may be relevant until it has been photographed and documented.           <input type="checkbox"/> Store relevant physical items in <b>sealed, labeled bags or containers</b>. Label each with date, time, description, and who collected it.           <input type="checkbox"/> Keep <b>original documents in a secure location</b>. Work from photocopies for daily reference. Originals should not be carried, lent, or handled unnecessarily.           <input type="checkbox"/> Note and photograph the <b>surrounding area</b> of any physical evidence: cameras, signage, nearby businesses, sight lines. Context matters.         </div> </div>                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                          |                |
| <div> <div>03 People to Document</div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> Write down the <b>full name, contact information, and role</b> of every person who was present or has relevant knowledge. Do this while memory is fresh.           <input type="checkbox"/> Note <b>what each person saw, heard, or knows</b> in your own words, with the date and time you documented it. Keep this separate from any formal statement.           <input type="checkbox"/> Identify people who were <b>present but not necessarily paying attention</b>. Bystanders, colleagues nearby, delivery drivers, neighboring residents.         </div> </div>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                          |                |
| <div> <div>04 Communications</div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Do not delete any messages, emails, or voicemails</b>, even ones that seem unfavorable to your position. Deletion can constitute destruction of evidence.           <input type="checkbox"/> Screenshot text conversations <b>in full, scrolling to capture complete threads</b>. Do not summarize. Capture the actual text with timestamps and contact names.         </div> </div>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                          |                |

☐ Note any **surveillance cameras, building cameras, dashcams, or recording devices** that may have captured relevant footage. Footage is often overwritten within 24-72 hours.

☐ **Do not ask witnesses to sign anything** or make formal statements without legal guidance. Informal documentation protects everyone's options.

☐ For verbal conversations that were not recorded: write a **contemporaneous memo immediately** (date, time, location, who was present, what was said word for word as best you can recall). Email it to yourself to create a timestamped record.

☐ Preserve all **platform notification emails**: Zoom meeting invites, Slack notifications, calendar entries, read receipts. These establish that communications occurred.

☐ **Stop discussing the situation on social media** immediately, in any form, including private messages and stories.

## 05 · MOST IMPORTANT Critical DON'Ts: What Destroys Cases Before They Start

☐ **Do not destroy, delete, or alter any document, file, or record.**

This can be charged as a crime independent of the underlying matter and is among the most damaging things a party can do to their own case.

☐ **Do not contact the opposing party, potential witnesses, or anyone connected to the matter without legal guidance.**

This includes "just to talk." Informal contact creates evidentiary and legal exposure.

☐ **Do not assume your devices, accounts, or communications are private.**

Emails, texts, and accounts accessed on shared or employer-owned networks may not be protected.

☐ **Do not discuss the details with anyone who does not need to know.**

Conversations with friends, family, and coworkers are generally not privileged and can become evidence.

☐ **Do not post about the situation on social media in any form.**

Public posts, private posts, stories, and messages on any platform can be subpoenaed or screenshotted by others.

☐ **Do not wait.**

Surveillance footage is overwritten in 24-72 hours. Voicemail auto-deletes. Memories fade. Platform logs expire. The window for preserving evidence closes faster than most people expect.

This checklist is for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice.

For situation-specific guidance, consult a licensed attorney in your jurisdiction.

*clutch.*

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