



# Property Marking

## An Introduction to Property Marking

Property Marking is a simple, low-cost and highly effective way to safeguard many types of property. For maximum deterrent effect, the marking must be readily visible and permanent, making it of no value to the would-be thief. In the event that marked equipment is lost or stolen, it is easily identified and there is a better chance of recovery.

**There are a number of methods of marking property quickly and easily and at little cost per item:-**

### CHEMICAL ETCHING

Chemical etching is an effective method of permanently marking surfaces such as plastic, aluminium, metal, glass and wood. A disposable adhesive stencil punched through with the lettering required by the property owner is attached to the item and special marking fluid applied. The stencil is then removed, leaving a permanent visible mark chemically etched into the surface of the property. This cannot be removed without defacing the item.

The marking process is quick and simple and is normally carried out by the owner.

### LABELLING & ETCHING

Chemical etching can be combined with labels which remain on the property, for higher visibility and deterrent effect. These labels can be in colour and can show owner's name, logo, Chinese characters and even barcodes. After printing, the labels are punched through with the lettering required by the property owner and marking compound is applied through the holes to etch the surface. The labels are made from tamper-resistant material and are difficult to remove but even if removed, the ID mark remains permanently and visibly etched into the surface of the item.

### DNA & FORENSIC CHEMICAL MARKING

High-risk items such as tools and equipment can be marked with a 'DNA' or forensic chemical code which is unique and registered to the owner of the equipment.

The DNA chemical is contained in an adhesive solution, lacquer, or chemical etching fluid which is applied to the equipment. To remove all traces of the DNA would be very difficult – requiring the thief to access all cracks, seams and uneven surfaces. It is therefore difficult to remove the forensic ownership evidence without completely defacing the item. The fluid can contain a UV element which shows up under UV examination, aiding the collection of samples for analysis and identification.

## ELECTRONIC ID TAGGING

Electronic tagging is usually used in identifying high-value items. Relevant information is programmed into small electronic RFID tags, which are then permanently attached to the surface of the item or concealed inside it. Ownership of the item can be checked by using handheld readers to read the tag.

## MICRODOTS

These are tiny dots about the size of a pinhead, printed with a serial number unique to the owner of the item, which can only be read with a special magnifier. The dots are usually supplied in small containers with special adhesive and a number of dots are then brushed onto the surface/hidden areas of the item. Even entire vehicles can be sprayed with such microdots. To be safe, the would-be thief would have to search the entire surface of the item to ensure all dots have been removed.

## Where Can You Get Professional Advice?

In Hong Kong, there are a number of companies which can provide expert advice on permanent property marking, tailored to your requirements. The Crime Prevention Bureau advises that if you intend to permanently mark property, advice be sought from a reputable company.

The following company sponsored the Crime Prevention Bureau's Property Marking display module:-

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