

Thank you for your interest in Erie Landmark Time Capsules. This manual contains suggestions about how to use your Time Capsule, where to place it and materials to include inside. This manual also contains important instructions on filling and sealing the capsule to ensure that your mementos are preserved safely for many years.

If you have any questions, please call (800) 874-7848 during business hours (Eastern Time Zone).

Where to Place Your Time Capsule

Your Erie Landmark Time Capsule is designed for both display and internment (burial). The best location for the Time Capsule will have little humidity, and will be protected against damage or misplacement. Locations of capsules have sometimes been lost over time because of insufficient record keeping, or damaged by earth moving equipment. If the Time Capsule is stored underground or in a wet environment, it may be necessary to provide additional protection such as a concrete “vault” around the capsule. Some groups prefer to leave the Time Capsule on display or to “pass” the capsule on to rotating custodians. In fact, displayed capsules are attention grabbers and significant tools for promoting projects, meetings, and events.

What to Put into Your Time Capsule

The materials you choose will depend, in part, on the length of time the capsule is to remain sealed. There are two basic categories of “opening” events: reunions and posterity. Some reunions plan to have the participants present both when the capsule is sealed and when it is opened. The placement time can be relatively short (10-50 years). Time Capsules for “posterity” will be opened by future generations, and are therefore closed for longer periods of time (over 50 years.)

Some general keys to success are:

- (1) A clear idea of what you wish to communicate to the “openers”
- (2) Creativity
- (3) Tailoring to the personality of the family, community, or organization.

The following are suggestions for materials to include regardless of the length of time the capsule are to remain sealed:

Written materials: Yearbooks, copies of newspaper articles, family trees, historical summaries, award certificates, personal histories, or predictions. Paper should be rolled rather than folded.

Photographs: Black and white photos and color slides have a longer life than color photos.

Objects: Campaign buttons, product packaging, toys, fad items.

Clothing: Current fashions are often the hit of a reunion and of interest to future generations.

Mechanical or electrical gadgets: Do not include batteries in the capsule (they contain acids and can leak). Computer disks should be accompanied by printed documentation explaining the software used.

Video or cassette tapes: These may be included but it is important to consider that the tape may have a shorter shelf life than needed for this purpose. Also, the electronics necessary to view or listen to the tapes may not be available years from now.

Time Capsules “for posterity” will be opened by future generations. Content should be chosen with great care, and with the understanding that the “openers” may not understand obscure cultural references or phenomena. In addition to the items listed above, the following are suggestions of materials that offer a window into the past:

Statistical data from a locality or organization;

Financial data: budgets, annual reports, business plans;

Drafts of current legislative initiatives;

Maps and local sightseeing literature;

Technical literature and drawings;

Oral histories and detailed biographies;

Commemorative medallions and coins;

Typical manufactured products with detailed descriptions of use and operation.

Material Conservation

Your Erie Landmark Time Capsule is designed for strength, air and water tightness, and for balanced oxygen and moisture content to preserve your important mementos.

Items should be selected with regard to both interest and longevity. Most importantly, one must take care to avoid materials or placement techniques, which may lead to destruction of other materials in the Time Capsule.

Paper of poor quality, especially newspaper, tends to degrade over time.

Moreover, the acids released in the capsule can damage other artifacts.

Several products on the market are available to stabilize and help preserve artifacts, including low-acid or acid-free paper and cardboard mat, and de-acidifying sprays and laminates. Contact local paper and graphic arts suppliers for details.

In order to minimize damage from acid and other chemical reactions among materials in the capsule, we recommend isolating articles individually in polyethylene bags or hard plastic food storage containers. Leave the bags unsealed to allow the inert gas to protect all of the items enclosed.

Erie Landmark is not responsible for any damage caused by improper use and improper pressurization. Please Read Instructions Carefully.

For advice on conservation materials, we suggest you contact a local museum specialist.

Sealing the Time Capsule

Excessive moisture may cause the stored materials to deteriorate. We have included a sufficient quantity of desiccant to absorb any moisture located in the stored materials.

The Erie Landmark Time Capsule is designed to be airtight and watertight. Simply bolt the lid onto the lip of the “body” of the capsule. The rubber lining seals the contents in.

As an additional measure of security, we also recommend placing a bead of caulk along the edge of the lid when sealing it and we’ve added a small tube of it to the time capsule package.

Removing Oxygen for Long-Term Storage – BE VERY CAREFULL – THESE TIMECAPSULES ARE NOT PRESSURIZED DEVICES – We recommend handling by appropriate personnel with training ONLY!

Oxygen is a central factor in the deterioration of stored material such as paper, synthetics and some metallic items. However, a complete absence of oxygen may cause paper and other materials to become brittle. Oxygen replacement as described here will help preserve your materials but it is not necessary if you do not have someone with the appropriate training to complete the process.

Inert gases such as argon and nitrogen are non-toxic, non-flammable, and harmless when handled properly. You can obtain argon and nitrogen from local suppliers such as industrial and medical gas retailers. Some propane tank filling stations also carry these gases. Consult them for proper handling techniques – MAKE SURE THAT THEY FILL THE TIMECAPSULE AT THE LOWEST POSSIBLE PRESSURE SETTING – THEY CAN EXPLODE IF TOO MUCH PRESSURE IS APPLIED OR IF THE GAS IS APPLIED TOO FAST!!

To replace oxygen in the capsule: Fill and seal the Time Capsule. To allow for insertion of gas, one end of your capsule has a valve, the other has a plug. Open the plug COMPLETELY. At the valve end, and with very low pressure, begin filling the capsule with gas. You are pushing the enclosed oxygen out. After a few seconds, close the plug but continue to fill the Time Capsule with gas until full – BE VERY CAREFUL WITH THIS STEP – MAKE SURE YOUR FILLING STATION HAS ADVISED YOU ON PROPER HANDLING TECHNIQUES – THIS IS NOT A PRESSURIZED DEVICE – IT WILL EXPLODE IF YOU APPLY TOO MUCH GAS. When full, tighten the valve and the plug by hand.

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