



WEST WILTSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

USE AND STORAGE OF DIGITAL IMAGES

DIGITAL IMAGING PROCEDURE

This procedure deals with using digital images as evidence in prosecutions.

Evidence

With conventional film photography, the negatives are referred to as the primary or original images and prints are made from them. This also applies to analogue video recordings. The first tape is sealed as the master tape once the first copy has been made from it. The copy tape will always be a degraded version because noise becomes added at each copying, and the quality will be compounded by physical wear and tear of the tape.

However, with digital imaging, it is possible to make a bit-for-bit identical copy and in evidential terms there is no distinction between the primary original file and any copy because the files are the same.

For evidential purposes, it is essential to be able to demonstrate that the images are authentic and have originated from the files captured on the camera and recorded to the first medium.

Provided you have written audit trails digital image files can be used in the same way as for conventional photography and video.

Remember - digital images can never be an exact reproduction of the scene. This is because most digital cameras and colour cameras use a multitude of complex image processing techniques to combine the signals from the charge - coupled devices pixels into an image of the subject. The image will only ever be an approximation of the subject. It is a representation of the subject in the same way that conventional photographs are.

PROCEDURE

1. Start audit trail (see Digital Imaging Audit Trail form below).

This should include the following:-

- Date
- Time
- Details of investigation
- Description of shots or footage taken
- Camera type – video make and model
 - camera make and model
- Downloading the data
- The creation and defining of the master
- The storage of the master
- Any access to the master
- Any copying that is required to ensure longevity of the data
- Viewing the master
- Use of the master in court
- Disposal

2. Check the equipment.

Ensure that:-

- Operator adjustable settings are made approximately (refer to relevant equipment procedure).
- The date and time settings are correct.
- You have adequate memory chips and/or tapes.
- The memory is clear.
- The tape is new or properly erased and reformatted.
- The tape tabs are intact and will not prevent recording.
- The batteries are fully charged, including spare batteries.

3. Record the images. It is important that no images are deleted from the original recordings.

4. Download the data from the memory card of the camera straight away onto CD.

The CD becomes the master file and the memory card can be reformatted and reused. The master CD must be saved as read only. Produce a “write once read many times” (WORM) working copy on CD-R as soon as possible after the capture to reduce the time and opportunity for the accidental or malicious alteration to the image.

5. If using video - remove the tape or disc straight away.

The tape or storage media used in the camera becomes the master tape and copies can be made by copying onto VHS tape using a VHS recorder, or by copying the file on to other storage media (CD, SD card etc.). On the master tape, push in the write protect tabs to prevent further recording.

6. Make a working copy.

7. The master tape must be followed and stored securely in the cabinet in the strong room. It should not be viewed again until necessary in court.

Working copy should be produced immediately after the master is defined. The working copy can be used for investigation and to assist in preparing for the prosecution.

Compliance with the Criminal Procedure & Investigations Act 1996, the Data Protection Act 1998 and relevant legislation must be followed.

Log all use and movement of the master file on the audit trail form. Also log any enhancement, significant use and distribution of working copies on the audit trail form.

8. Once case closed destroy all exhibits and close the audit trail.

DIGITAL IMAGING AUDIT TRAIL

Case Address & Reg. N°

Case Officer: _____

Date & Time: _____

Detail of Case: _____

Detail of Shots taken for digital camera

1 _____ 11 _____

2 _____ 12 _____

3 _____ 13 _____

4 _____ 14 _____

5 _____ 15 _____

6 _____ 16 _____

7 _____ 17 _____

8 _____ 18 _____

9 _____ 19 _____

10 _____ 20 _____

Detail of video footage taken

Camera type _____

Data Download

	Officer Name	Equipment used	CD/tape labelled	CD/tape reg. n°	Copies made	Date master stored	Date master accessed
Creating and downloading the master							
Working copy	Officer name	Date & time copy made	CD/tape labelled	CD/tape reg. n°			

Date on which master and working copy were destroyed and by whom

Other Info: