



# **NORTH MIAMI POLICE DEPARTMENT**

## *STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES*



### **CRIME SCENE DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY 400.12**

EFFECTIVE DATE: 09-22-23

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SUPERSEDES: 09-15-20

CFA: N/A

#### **I. PURPOSE**

To establish guidelines for the production, processing, handling and storage of all digital images.

#### **II. POLICY**

To permit the use of digital cameras for investigative and documentary purposes where reasonable and appropriate. The selection of digital equipment shall be based on a determination of whether the predicted image will be of sufficient quality to meet investigative and documentary purposes. Digital cameras will be utilized as the primary image capture devices at crime scenes. Authorized personnel capturing digital images by way of an Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (a/k/a Drone) will refer to its policy under S.O.P. 400.21.

#### **III. SCOPE**

This policy applies to all members of the Department.

#### **IV. LEGAL**

All procedures contained in this policy will be in compliance with the Federal Rules of Evidence, as contained in Rule 101 (1,3,4) and Rule 103. The successful introduction of forensic imagery as evidence in a court of law is dependent upon the following four legal tests:

- A. Reliability
- B. Reproducibility
- C. Security
- D. Discovery

## V. DEFINITIONS

It is the intent of this policy to provide information and definitions for use when discussing imaging and imaging technologies, as well as providing specific operating procedures for the use of imaging technologies. This is vital for the successful introduction as evidence in a court of law.

- A. Archive image: An image stored on media suitable for long-term storage.
- B. Copy image: A reproduction of information contained in a primary (master) image, archive image, or original image, irrespective of media.
- C. Digital image: An image that is stored in numerical form readable by computer, camera, or other device.
- D. Dedicated computer: A computer designed for the downloading of specific digital photographic images.
- E. DVD/CD: Master disc upon which primary images have been transferred to create the master images.
- F. Hard drive: Component of a computer that holds the primary information regarding that computer.
- G. JPG or JPEG: (Joint Photographic Experts Group) Digital file scheme that utilizes a glossy image compression process to reduce the size of the image file.
- H. Master image: An accurate and complete replica of the primary image, irrespective of media.
- I. Memory card: Any object on which an image is preserved.

- J.     Pixels: Each individual element of a digital picture to which a specific color and brightness can be assigned.
- K.     Primary image: The first instance in which an image is recorded onto any media (e.g., a digital image recorded on a memory card).
- L.     RAW Files: A raw file is a collection of unprocessed data. This means the file has not been altered, compressed, or manipulated in any way by the computer
- M.     TIFF File: An industry standard file type for distributing high quality scanned images or finished photographic files.
- N.     Working copy: A duplicate of the master image used for investigative purposes, forensic analysis and prosecutorial presentation.
- O.     WORM (Write Once Read Many) media: Storage media, such as a CD-R or DVD-R that is used to permanently store or archive images.
- P.     Wipe: The process of deleting the contents of media.
- Q.     Language Clarification:
- Should: Indicates a general or expected action, absent a rational basis for failing to conform.
  - Shall or Will: Indicates a mandatory action.

## VI. PROCEDURES

- A.     Documentation of images taken:
1.     The first photographs taken in the series should depict, but not be limited to, the following information:
    - Case number
    - Date/Time
    - Location
    - Name/ID number of person taking the photographs
  2.     The capturing of **all** photographs will be documented in a

supplementary/offense report.

B. Chain of custody:

1. Digital images recorded as evidence shall be handled and processed in accordance with Department policy, procedures and training prescribed for processing evidence.
2. When master images are preserved on designated media, including computer systems accessible by authorized personnel, a documented audit trail (log) is established within the computer software. The audit trail will record the date, time, person who accessed the master image, and action taken (preparation of working copies, duplication for prosecution, and/or detectives). A property receipt shall be issued for all DVDs/CDs.

C. Equipment:

1. Digital imaging equipment shall only be used for Department-related business.
2. Designated personnel shall be responsible for the routine care and inspection of their equipment to ensure proper operation. An asset inventory record will be maintained on each piece of equipment. This record will include the manufacturer, model number and serial number. Any equipment that is deemed non-functional, shall be removed from service until the deficiencies have been resolved, or the equipment has been replaced.

D. Capture of primary images:

1. Designated personnel will select camera settings that will enable them to accurately capture the scene, injury, item, or anything pertaining to the investigation.
2. Separate assignments or events (cases) **will not** be recorded on the same device/memory card until all files from previous assignments have been removed from that device.
3. Following capture, primary digital images shall not be deleted, adjusted, or manipulated in any way.

4. Unless otherwise specified, images will be captured in an accepted format, i.e., JPEG, or raw, to preserve image integrity.

E. STORING IMAGES- MASTER FILE CREATION:

1. Once images are captured, the Crime Scene Technician or Investigations supervisor, will remove the camera's digital imaging storage device (memory card) and shall transfer images to Veripic, the computer software designated for this purpose only. Each Crime Scene Technician, or authorized designee, shall perform his/her own assigned case/digital image transfer. Transfer of primary images will be conducted as soon as reasonably possible. Images will be stored and indexed under their respective case number, pertinent case information and photographer.
2. After the images have been downloaded, the person downloading the images will verify that the images are stored.
3. Once the digital images have been successfully transferred to the secured storage device, the digital memory card of the primary imaging device will be erased or wiped and re-used by the Crime Scene Technician or authorized designee.
4. Only authorized personnel with a user I.D. and password will have access.

F. RETRIEVAL: All requests for photographs will be routed to the custodian of the respective units, and will be provided pursuant to Florida Public Records Law.

1. A working image, which is a copy or copies of the master image(s), may be made as necessary to create working copies, and will be labeled as such.
2. Copies of these images shall be transferred to a DVD Write Once Read Many (WORM), and shall be performed by authorized personnel only.
3. Digital images will be printed on an as-needed basis for trial and ongoing investigations.
4. A fee for photographic prints or digital image files created for private attorneys, citizens, insurance companies, and any others,

will be charged to the requestor, plus a fee for each C.D.

5. A property receipt shall be issued for all CD/DVD (working copies) to maintain chain of custody.

## **VII. PHOTOGRAPHS AS EVIDENCE**

Photographs are evidence, whether they are in the form of exposed film, processed negatives, or digital images on electronic media.

The person attempting to admit the photograph into evidence (in court or through deposition) must be prepared to offer testimony that the photograph is a “true and accurate representation” of the scene.

## **VIII. TRAINING**

Agency personnel authorized to capture, process, or store digital images, shall receive initial training and periodic refresher training on the equipment, computer programs and techniques used by the Department.

Training will include photographing scenes and/or injuries utilizing digital equipment.