



GENERAL ORDER OPS-63 DIGITAL CAMERAS AND IMAGES

EFFECTIVE MAY 20, 2015

This General Order contains the following numbered sections:

- I. POLICY
- II. FIELD PROCEDURES
- III. REQUESTING COPIES
- IV. CANCELLATION

I. POLICY

The Howard County Department of Police (HCPD) shall utilize structured procedures to ensure the most secure, effective use and maintenance of digital camera technology to support investigative, operational, and administrative missions.

II. FIELD PROCEDURES

- A. Members shall not take crime scene, vehicle collision scene, or investigative images with personally owned cameras (including cell-phone cameras). As a last resort or for a covert operation, the use of personal digital cameras may be authorized by a supervisor. That supervisor shall be responsible for ensuring appropriate data transfer and file deletion from the member's personal device. All images, taken at a crime scene, vehicle collision scene, or to further the investigation of any police-related manner, are considered evidence and shall be submitted to the Forensics Services Section (FSS) immediately, but no later than the end of shift. All photos taken will remain the property of the Howard County Police Department. No photos will be taken, printed, downloaded, or distributed for any officer's personal use, unless used in a departmentally approved manner and with the approval of the Chief of Police or his designee (e.g. training, charity support, marketing, etc.).
- B. No member will be authorized to store and/or duplicate any photographic digital information that is classified as evidence on any departmental or personal computer (system) without supervisory approval. Additionally, no digital photographs classified as evidence will be stored by and/or transmitted to other individuals without approval. No digital photographs will be posted on the Internet without the approval of the Chief of Police or his designee. The only exception will be the existing procedures and/or future electronic advancements that allow the FSS to transmit data to and from appropriate entities.
- C. Generally each departmental camera will be issued with at least two (2) media cards for the assigned camera. A spare set of batteries will also be kept with the camera at all times.
- D. Each member and/or supervisor assigned a digital camera will be responsible for the care, maintenance, and security of the camera and shall maintain the camera in a state of operational readiness.¹
- E. The correct date and time shall be properly set within the camera.
- F. When photographing a scene, if possible, photograph only one case per media card. If more than one case is on a media card, take a photo of a piece of paper with the case number, date, crime and location, then proceed with the scene photography. For detailed procedures members are directed to the section regarding crime scene photography in the HCPD Evidence Manual.

¹ CALEA 17.5.3

- G. When photographing victim injuries, both facial and full body photographs shall be taken to establish context/identity.
- H. All digital images shall be captured at the largest file size and the finest quality setting available for the camera used. The images will be downloaded as soon as possible, following the completion of the assignment.
- I. Before removing a media card from the camera, THE CAMERA MUST BE TURNED **OFF**, AS A LOSS OF DATA MAY OCCUR.
- J. Sworn officers will forward the storage media to the FSS using the Howard County Police Film Envelope (Form HCPD 1312) via Departmental mail as soon as possible following the completion of the assignment. After the images have been downloaded, the media will be returned to the submitting officer in the same envelope. The submitting officer shall be responsible for reformatting the media. A Photo Lab Work Request form (HCPD #1310) will be completed by the Crime Scene Technician downloading the images and forwarded to the Records Section.

III. REQUESTING COPIES

- A. If the requesting party is a HCPD member, the requesting officer or detective will submit a HCPD Form 1312 (Film Envelope) to request copies of digital photos. The requesting party will fill out the date, case number, submitting officer duty station, offense and the section titled PRINTS, with the date needed, copies needed and size of prints. The completed prints will be returned to the requesting officer in the envelope submitted.
- B. Requests for photos and digital images from the State's Attorney's Office (SAO) may be made through the Records Section. Records will forward the request to the FSS for processing, which when completed, will be available for the SAO to pick up from the photo lab in FSS.
- C. All requests from defense attorneys, insurance companies, etc. will be made through the Records Section at the expense of the requesting party.

IV. CANCELLATION

This General Order will cancel and replace General Order OPS-63 Digital Cameras and Images, dated January 14, 2011.

AUTHORITY:



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