CITY OF ORLANDO
POLICE DEPARTMENT

**Policy:** 1902.7, Forensic Photography, Digital Cameras, and Digital Imaging Archive
**Effective Date:** 10/30/2024
**Distribution Group:** CSIs and CSI Supervisors
**Review Responsibility:** Crime Center Division Commander
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**Chief of Police:** Eric D. Smith

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## I. PURPOSE

This directive is intended to provide information about the Forensic Imaging Lab and the duties and services of the Forensic Photographer. It also provides direction regarding the use of issued digital cameras, the handling of digital media, and digital archiving.

## II. POLICY

With the ongoing development of technology and the availability of personally-owned recording devices, smartphones, tablets, etc., all employees shall acknowledge this policy shall applies to the capture, handling, and archiving of all digital evidence. This may include, but is not limited to, incidents where certain evidence may be irretrievably altered or lost before the arrival of a supervisor, corporal, or CSI.

This may also include circumstances where fire department officials, public works personnel, and/or any wrecker service have responded, and the nature of their lawful duties directly creates a danger for certain evidence remaining

intact. Further examples would include situations where rapidly changing weather conditions jeopardize the position or structure of the evidence being documented.

## III. DEFINITIONS

Forensic Photography: Forensic Photography is the provision of general and forensic photographic services, including photography of evidence, for use in investigations. The end product is generally used for potential or actual courtroom presentations.

Forensic Photographer: The Forensic Photographer provides general and technical photographic services for the Orlando Police Department. The Forensic Photographer is responsible for specialized forensic photography of evidence as well as processing and printing digital images captured by Crime Scene Investigators (CSIs). The Forensic Photographer maintains photo processing/printing equipment, server-based forensic image management systems, and departmental negative files. The Forensic Photographer also performs some public-relations photography and assists the Forensic Video Analyst as needed. Ultimately, work is viewed by investigators, crime lab experts, attorneys, and jurors who rely on photography to determine the outcome of the investigation. The Forensic Photographer works in the Forensic Imaging Lab under the supervision of the Forensics Manager.

## IV. PROCEDURES

### 1. USE OF DIGITAL CAMERA

The following are guidelines for the use of a digital camera. Photographs to be used for scientific comparison will be taken by a CSI or Forensic Photographer.

### 1.1 VERIFICATION OF ORIGINAL

Personnel who capture the original image, or were present at the time the original image was captured, can verify the image is a true and accurate representation. The basic premise of evidentiary photography requires the photographer to be able to testify the photo accurately represents what they observed and it has not changed.

### 1.2 CUSTODY

Upon the capture of an image to the time of download on the designated server or Evidence.com, the images are in the custody of the person who captured the original image. Once images are downloaded, they are either in the custody and control of the Forensic Imaging Lab, which is staffed by the Forensic Photographer or on Evidence.com.

### 1.3 CAMERA/CARD SECURITY AND HANDLING

Do not set a camera/card down or leave it unattended in an unsecured area. Remember, the images on the card are evidence and should be treated as such. Good security practices provide the foundation for the chain of custody and ensure the integrity of the evidence. By preventing unauthorized access, and by eliminating any perception that unauthorized access may have occurred, you reduce any accusations of tampering. Employees shall not share evidentiary images, audio, or video with any person.

The State Attorney's Office can request images by Tasking the Forensic Imaging Lab through proper channels. Another Law Enforcement Agency can go through the detective in charge of the case being requested, OPD

Records, or through the Forensic Imaging Lab. Individuals, such as private Attorneys, Insurance Companies or media, can make a Public Records Request.

### 1.4 TYPE OF CAMERA TO USE

For all Body Worn Camera Videos and stills, please refer to 1140.11 and 1149.2. **Use of digital cameras (this includes cell phone cameras) less than 3.1 megapixels or 2048 pixels x 1536 pixels is prohibited for evidence gathering** unless no other device is available. Image resolution lower than 3.1 megapixels or 2048 pixels x 1536 pixels will not meet acceptable practices for courtroom proceedings.

### 1.5 SCALES

Photos of injuries should be taken both with and without a scale.

## 2. PROCEDURES FOR CAPTURED IMAGES

When an image is captured, it should be previewed to judge the quality. If the quality of the image is not sufficient (i.e., too dark, too light, or blurred), adjust for the problem and recapture another image. **DO NOT DELETE THE ORIGINAL IMAGE.**

All images captured directly to a dedicated storage media (secure disk [SD] media card, compact flash [CF] media card, memory stick, etc.) within a digital camera need to be preserved. **Do not transfer images or copy images to another source as this damages the integrity of the original image**. Case photographs are not to be transferred or downloaded to any issued computer, except those dedicated for processing digital evidence.

Evidence photos are considered evidence and to maintain the chain of custody (CoC), they should go directly from the camera memory card to the server. This transfer represents our CoC and is stored on every image metadata for integrity. If the image is downloaded onto a computer first, prior to going to the server, the metadata will show a breach in CoC, possibly calling into question the integrity of the image.

CSIs upload directly to the server or will give the memory card directly to the Photo Lab to upload.

**DO NOT ATTEMPT TO RENAME FILES TAKEN WITH YOUR DIGITAL CAMERA**

## 3. DIGITAL IMAGING ARCHIVE

### 3.1 SPECIFIED DOWNLOAD PROGRAM

Digital images of casework must be downloaded through the Digital Imaging Archive's specified system. Use of any other download software, including Windows Explorer, is strictly prohibited (some exclusions apply to the Digital Forensic Lab and Forensic Imaging Lab).

### 3.2 SECURITY PROCEDURES

The Forensic Photographer oversees the Digital Imaging database. The Digital Imaging Archive Server is a secure system only used to download digital images, movies, interviews and documents pertaining to casework.

### 3.3 LEVELS OF ACCESS

Forensic Photographers, Forensic Video Analysts, CSIs, detectives, and officers will have access to this system by a password. All attempts to log in to the system are tracked and stored. All photographic image access is tracked and stored with the case file on the image server. If requested, a list of personnel who have viewed or ordered services is available.

### 3.4 USER INFORMATION

All user information is stored with the original case images. This includes, but is not limited to: the date and time of download, personnel downloading images, number of photographs, and camera settings (mode, flash settings, lens shutter speed, aperture, ISO, auto focus/manual focus, etc.), camera metadata and an audit trail for all who have viewed and/or downloaded images from any case.

### 3.5 TIMEFRAME

Downloading of images must be completed before the end of the employee's tour of duty unless the immediate supervisor approves a delay. Any delay in downloading may result in delayed access and can lead to questions concerning the integrity of the evidentiary chain of custody.

### 3.6 DELETION AND REFORMATTING

No images will be deleted from the media card or device before they are downloaded and archived to the image file server. After all images have been successfully downloaded, the files may be deleted from the media card through the camera menu. The use of any Windows programs such as Explorer for the deletion of digital images is forbidden. Reformat your memory card in your camera as maintenance to ensure the accurate functionality of the memory cards.

Evidentiary photographic images, audio, or video captured on any employee's personally-owned device, once downloaded, shall also be deleted from the personally-owned device as well as any other shared-storage locations not authorized by policy before the end of the employee's tour of duty unless the immediate supervisor approves a delay.

### 3.7 PRODUCTION OF IMAGES AND OTHER SERVICES

The Forensic Imaging lab is no longer suppling prints to anyone or agency. Contact Sheets or Proof Sheets can be supplied to CSI's and Detectives. All other services will be processed as requested. Requests may be submitted by completion of the Forensic Imaging Lab Photo Request Order. The Lab Photo Request Order can be emailed to opdphotolab@orlando.gov. List all individuals that will receive prints as this information is logged with the case file for tracking purposes. The Forensic Imaging Lab Photo Request Order can be found on Team Link > Crime Center & Patrol Links > Crime Center > Request Forms > OPD Photo Lab Request Form.

## 4. CARE AND STORAGE

If equipment is lost, damaged, or otherwise inoperable, inform the Forensic Imaging Lab immediately. Digital cameras are susceptible to damage if proper care is not taken. Cameras should be used and cared for properly. Equipment should be treated as a portable computer. Avoid any impact with the camera or camera case. Do not get the camera wet. Avoid exposure to temperature extremes. If the equipment becomes too cold or too hot when the weather is humid, the lens can fog and condensation can form. In general, condensation happens because of two

factors, humidity, and the temperature difference between the air and the camera. The camera equipment may need to acclimate to the room or outside temperature it is in. It may take several minutes for the condensation to clear from the camera/lens. Once the lens is clear you can wipe it down with a clean cloth to ensure it is dry.

### 5. CSI TRAINING

In addition to the instruction manual provided by the manufacturer, additional training will be provided to all new CSIs as directed by the Forensics Manager by appointment, through the Forensic Imaging Lab. Lesson plans for this block of instruction will be maintained in the Forensic Imaging Lab. (14.03) Signatures and sign-off sheets of all exercises performed will be maintained in the CSI office.

### 6. MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR

All equipment shall be maintained according to the manufacturer's specifications and recommendations as contained within the operations manual. When a piece of equipment falls outside these specifications and recommendations the equipment will be taken out of service until it has been corrected. Any functionality or serviceability problems should be reported to the Forensic Imaging Lab immediately. A division commander and Fiscal Management administrator will determine the appropriate funds to be utilized for the maintenance/repair of this equipment. All receipts will be returned to Fiscal Management as soon as possible.

## V. FORMS AND APPENDICES

ATTACHMENT A-Forensic Imaging Lab Photo Request

## VI. REFERENCES

This policy rescinds Policy and Procedure 1902.6

Related Policies: Not Applicable

Related Laws: Not Applicable