



# HARFORD COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE OPERATIONS POLICY

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Sheriff

## Digital Images

|                          |                               |                  |                 |                     |                 |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Distribution:</b>     | <b>All Employees</b>          | <b>Index:</b>    | <b>OPS 1206</b> |                     |                 |
| <b>Responsible Unit:</b> | <b>Forensic Services Unit</b> | <b>Rescinds:</b> | <b>MAN 4100</b> |                     |                 |
|                          |                               | <b>MD Code:</b>  |                 |                     |                 |
| <b>Issued:</b>           | <b>11/29/21</b>               | <b>Reviewed:</b> | <b>11/18/21</b> | <b>Next Review:</b> | <b>11/18/24</b> |

### 1. Purpose

To provide members of the Harford County Sheriff's Office (HCSO) with procedures and guidelines for recording and storage of digital images.

### 2. Policy

The HCSO recognizes the importance of properly recording, storing, and preserving digital images for evidentiary purposes. Therefore, Agency members will strictly adhere to procedures and guidelines set forth in this policy to ensure that the integrity of digital images is not compromised.

### 3. Procedures

#### A. Digital Images General

1. Agency members will only use Agency issued equipment/devices to capture images.
2. If photographs, digital images, or videos are taken at a crime scene, this information will be included in the narrative section of an Incident Report in the Law Enforcement Records Management System (RMS).
3. All photographs, digital images or videos taken at a crime scene will be handled as evidence.
4. Exception: In exigent circumstances, when evidence may be lost or destroyed, members, at their discretion, may use personal equipment/devices to preserve evidence.
5. If members use their personal equipment/devices to preserve evidence, they will notify:
  - a. Their immediate supervisor; and
  - b. The Digital Forensics, who will transfer the image(s) to the HCSO **Digital Images Server** before deleting the image(s) from the member's device.
6. Members should be mindful that personal equipment/devices and its contents (e.g., media or SIM card, etc.) could be admissible in court and subject to the rules of discovery.

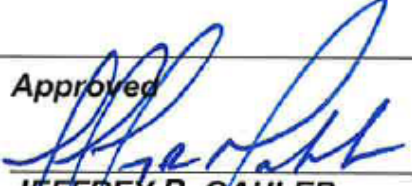
#### B. Digital Images Procedures

1. The photographer will submit all digital images on the original storage media within three working days, directly to the Digital **Forensics** for archive and permanent storage, utilizing the Digital Images Uploader Program.

2. The Digital Forensics will transfer the images to the Digital Images Server and create a backup within 10 working days.
3. The original storage media will be erased and may be reused.
4. No digital image will be erased, deleted, or overwritten until it has been uploaded to the Digital Images Server.
5. For cameras using compact flash media cards, floppy disks or other storage media, the original images will be uploaded to the Digital Images Server before the original image is deleted or overwritten.
6. For images sent to an Agency member via email or other means, the image(s) must be forwarded to Digital Forensics for archive and permanent storage.
7. The Digital Forensics will make all digital images in a case available on the computer network for review by the investigator and other interested parties.
8. In those instances where images are of sensitive or confidential nature, the Digital Forensics will take steps to restrict the viewing rights of those images.

C. Digital Images Guidelines

1. To ensure images are associated with the correct Incident Report RMS number, only photographs related to one criminal investigation will be included on a single media card or uploaded at a time using the Digital Images Uploader Program.
2. For cameras using compact flash cards, two extra flash cards will be issued with each digital camera.
3. Erased media will be returned to the photographer after the images are uploaded to the Digital Images Server.
4. Deputies may use the Digital Images Uploader Program to directly upload their images to a temporary storage location on the Digital Images server, and after verifying the images have been successfully uploaded, erase and ready their camera card for re-use without physically submitting the card to Digital Forensics.
5. Digital images will be retained on the HCSO Computer network for a period of three years and will be archived for a period of 50 years.

Approved  
  
JEFFREY R. GAHLER  
SHERIFF  
DATE 11/29/2021