
	GAITHERSBURG POLICE DEPARTMENT		
	Digital Photos and Recordings of Crime Scenes		
	GENERAL ORDER 1103.1	Related CALEA Standards:	
Effective Date 04/24/2015	83.2.2		
Authorized by: Mark P. Sroka CHIEF OF POLICE	SIGNATURE	DATE	

I. PURPOSE

Digital photos and/or recordings of evidence, or crime scenes themselves, are effective tools for enhancing investigations.

II. POLICY

The Department utilizes digital photos and recordings to depict crime scenes, evidence and to assist in case preparation or investigation. Officers will evaluate the benefit of photos and recordings for each incident and use these forms of documentation where reasonably appropriate.

III. DEFINITIONS

This directive does not contain any terms deemed to require special definition.

IV. PROCEDURE

A. Digital Photographs

1. Officers must evaluate each crime scene or incident to which they respond to determine the need for photographs.
2. If an officer determines that the taking of photographs would effectively document persons and/or evidence at a crime scene, especially a scene that is short lived, the officer will take photographs or arrange to have photographs taken.
3. Whenever possible, photographs will be taken before evidence is processed and collected in order to document where the evidence was found within the crime scene.
4. All officers are issued digital cameras so that crime and accident scenes can be properly documented and the issued camera will be the only device utilized for this purpose. If the crime scene is of a more serious nature, or beyond the resources of the officer or the Department's equipment, the officer should contact the MCP Forensic Services Section (FSS).
5. Until arrival of FSS, officers must ensure that the crime scene is

protected, pursuant to the guidelines and procedures listed in General Order 1101.1.

6. To fairly and accurately depict the evidence or crime scene photographed, all aspects of it will be photographed, if possible.
7. A scale or other reference object may be used in the photo field for relative size comparison. A practical way of showing an object's size or dimension is by photographing it above a ruler or yard stick.
8. To avoid the possibility of a challenge in court, photos should first be taken of the scene without a scale reference, and then photos from the same perspective can be taken showing the reference.
9. Whenever possible, photographs of evidence will show its location and how it relates to the scene.
10. When evidence is photographed separately, the officer will ensure that an appropriate background is used (i.e., dark colored object against a light colored background, etc.).
11. Digital photographs may be printed out at the time of downloading and should also be maintained in a secure folder on the Department's computer network (S:\Police\Photographs).
12. When digital photographs are printed, the following pertinent information will be recorded on the printout:
 - a) Date and time the photograph was taken;
 - b) Name of the officer who took the photograph(s);
 - c) Case number;
 - d) Brief description of what the photo depicts; and
 - e) Any other remarks or notes the officer believes would be helpful to refresh his or her recollection at a later date.
13. If digital photographs are printed, they will be printed in color and maintained by the officer in his or her case file.
14. Under no circumstances will anything be added or deleted to a digital photograph using any kind of editing software or by any other means.

15. The use of editing software to enhance the visibility (lighten, darken or contrast) of relevant items in the photograph is permitted, but must be documented in the event report and an original version of the image must also be maintained.

B. Digital Recording

1. Digital recording of crime scenes may be used in addition to digital photos.
2. Prior to recording a crime scene, the camera's correct time and date must be checked to illustrate and ensure the accuracy and integrity of what is being recorded.
3. Once the recording process has been completed, the officer conducting the recording is responsible for documenting the particulars of the incident being recording, such as:
 - a) Operator's name;
 - b) Date of the recording;
 - c) Beginning and ending times of recording;
 - d) Complete address/location of incident;
 - e) Location within the address (i.e., bedroom, etc.), where applicable;
 - f) A brief description of what is shown in the recording; and
 - g) Any other remarks that could benefit the investigation.
4. As soon as practical after the recording, the camera operator shall view the recording to ensure that it is suitable for court, preferably with the primary investigating officer present. The primary investigating officer will always view the recording, in its entirety, before it is presented in court.
5. Digital recordings, other than photographs are submitted to the Department's Property Custodian for storage in the same manner as other evidence.