



# GENERAL ORDER OPS-63 DIGITAL CAMERAS AND IMAGES

EFFECTIVE APRIL 9, 2021

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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<sup>1</sup>

- A. Members shall not take crime scene, vehicle collision scene, or investigative images with personally owned cameras or devices, including cell phone cameras, or Department issued cell phone cameras.<sup>2</sup>
  - 1. As a last resort or for a covert operation, the use of personal devices may be authorized by a supervisor.
    - a. Every effort should be made to receive permission from a supervisor prior to using a mobile device, outside the most exigent of circumstances.
    - b. That supervisor shall be responsible for ensuring appropriate data transfer and file deletion from the member's personal device.
  - 2. If an image is taken on a personal device, it shall be noted in the incident report.
- B. Members are prohibited from using personally owned video cameras, dash cameras, or the video camera feature on a mobile phone for recording crime scenes, traffic stops, interactions with citizens, or any investigative or police action.
- C. All images taken at a crime scene, vehicle collision scene, or to further the investigation of any police-related matter are considered evidence and shall be submitted to the Forensics Sciences Division (FSD) immediately, but no later than the end of shift, following the procedures in this policy. No images shall be submitted via email.
- D. No photos will be taken, printed, downloaded, or distributed for any member's personal use unless used in a departmentally approved manner and with the approval of the Chief of Police or his designee, i.e. for training, charity support, marketing, etc.
  - 1. 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 or electronic device without supervisory approval.

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<sup>1</sup> CALEA 83.2.2a

<sup>2</sup> CALEA 83.2.2d

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2. 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 FSD to transmit data to and from appropriate entities.
  3. All photos taken will remain the property of the Howard County Police Department.
  4. No digital photographs classified as evidence will be stored by and/or transmitted to other individuals without approval.
- E. Each departmental camera will be issued with at least two (2) media cards. A spare set of batteries will be kept with the camera at all times.
1. Each member 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.<sup>3</sup>
  2. The correct date and time shall be properly set within the camera.
  3. Supervisors shall verify on the appropriate monthly vehicle inspection form that the digital camera is maintained in a state of operational readiness.
- F. Only one case shall be photographed per media card. HCPD Form 1312, Digital Photo Evidence, shall serve as the photo identifier card. It shall be completely filled out and shall be the first photo taken for the case.
1. If multiple locations are involved in a single crime scene, a photo identifier that clearly delineates the new location shall be photographed to divide the images or the additional crime scene can be photographed with a separate media card.
  2. Before removing a media card from the camera, the camera must be turned off as a loss of data may occur.
  3. The media card shall be submitted in the HCPD Form 1312, Digital Photo Evidence envelope, that was photographed as the identifier card. The submitting officer shall secure the envelope closed with red evidence tape across the entire width of the envelope seal and write his initials and the date across the tape seal.
  4. The officer shall enter the submission in the Media Card Logbook and then place the envelope in the locked Media Card drop box.
- G. When photographing victim injuries, both facial and full body photographs shall be taken to establish context and identity. Injury photographs shall be taken both with and without scale.
- H. All digital images shall be captured at the largest file size and finest quality settings available for the camera used.
- I. Upon receipt by the FSD, the media will be downloaded, and the media card will be returned to the submitting officer. The officer shall be responsible for reformatting the media.
- J. HCPD Form 1310, Photo Lab Work Request, will be completed by the Crime Scene Technician downloading the images and forwarded to the Records Section.

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<sup>3</sup> CALEA 17.5.3

**III. REQUESTING COPIES**

- A. If the requesting party is a HCPD member, the requesting officer or detective will email the request to [fsdphotonlab@howardcountymd.gov](mailto:fsdphotonlab@howardcountymd.gov) with the subject "IR# \_\_\_\_ Photo Request". The requesting officer will include his name, ID number, assignment, and brief statement of the request in the body of the email. The prints will be forwarded to the officer when completed.
- B. Requests for photos and digital images from the State's Attorney's Office (SAO) will be submitted directly to FSD at [fsdphotonlab@howardcountymd.gov](mailto:fsdphotonlab@howardcountymd.gov) on HCPD Form 1302.
- C. All requests from defense attorneys, insurance companies, or third parties will be made through the Records Section at the expense of the requesting party. Records will submit these requests to FSD at [fsdphotonlab@howardcountymd.gov](mailto:fsdphotonlab@howardcountymd.gov) on HCPD Form 1302a.

**IV. CANCELLATION**

This General Order will cancel and replace General Order OPS-63 Digital Cameras and Images, dated May 20, 2015.

AUTHORITY:

  
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Lisa D. Myers  
Chief of Police