

## RENO POLICE DEPARTMENT GENERAL ORDER

This directive is for internal use only and does not enlarge this department's, governmental entity's and/or any of this department's employees' civil or criminal liability in any way. It is not to be construed as the creation of a particular standard of safety or care in an evidentiary sense, with respect to any complaint, demand for settlement, or any other form of grievance or litigation. Violations of this directive, if substantiated, can only form the basis for intra-departmental administrative sanctions.

Chief of Police: Mike Poehlman /s/		
Legal Advisor: Karen Fraley /s/		
Approving Deputy Chief:		
General Order No: E-130-05	Issued: January 3, 2006	Supersedes: 4/300.000
	Reissued:	Revised:
General Order Title: <b>DIGITAL IMAGING</b>		

### POLICY

The Department recognizes the technology known as digital photography as another tool to be used in conjunction with negative film photography in the investigation of crime scenes and other areas. It shall be the policy of the Department that all images obtained through the use of a digital imaging device be treated as all other physical evidence regarding the integrity of such evidence throughout its capture, transportation, storage, and use.

### PROCEDURES

#### General Information Concerning Digital Camera Use

Digital cameras shall be used, when possible, to document evidence such as domestic violence and other minor injuries, burglaries, criminal mischief, motor vehicle accidents and other incidents as desired. The digital camera shall be used in place of the instant film camera (Polaroid) and the patrol-issued 35 mm film camera when possible.

For incidents involving major crimes, consideration should be given to using the Washoe County Sheriff's Office Forensic Science Division for photographic documentation. If not practical, patrol personnel shall use a 35 mm camera as the primary camera. If unavailable, digital photographs will suffice.

For the capture of, and processing of, any primary image of evidentiary value, only departmentally- approved equipment will be used. This includes cameras, compact flash cards and any equipment used to process images.

A number of different cameras are currently approved by the Reno Police Department for collection of digital images. Due to image quality, the preferred camera is the Canon Powershot A85. Any future digital cameras to be approved for use by the Department must meet the following minimum specifications:

<b>Image Resolution:</b>	4.0 megapixels
<b>Lens:</b>	Fixed focus lens (Min. 2.8 aperture) Zoom lens optional
<b>Image Storage Format:</b>	Removable memory (Compact Flash Card)
<b>Image Recording Format:</b>	JPEG
<b>ASA/ISO Speeds:</b>	100 – 400
<b>Exposure Controls:</b>	Fully automatic
<b>Flash Capability:</b>	Auto built-in flash (minimum 12-foot coverage)
<b>Focusing Capability:</b>	Automatic
<b>White Balance:</b>	Automatic
<b>Interface Capability:</b>	USB Port

All photos taken will remain the property of the Reno Police Department. No photos will be taken, printed, downloaded, or distributed for personal use by any department or non-department employee.

### **Digital Image Integrity and Storage**

#### **VeriPic Digital Photo Management System**

The Department is absolutely committed to ensuring the integrity of all photographic information captured in a digital format and as such has purchased and installed on departmental computers the VeriPic Digital Photo Management System. This system includes software to verify and authenticate all digital photos taken and downloaded from the camera to the computer. In addition, an audit trail of those who import, view, print, etc., is logged and can be printed to demonstrate a chain of custody.

#### **Image Storage**

Images captured with a digital camera are original images and equivalent to a negative in film-based photography. All photographs taken at a crime scene are discoverable under current case law. Any original images taken at the crime scene, including any images collected as reference or administrative pictures, are considered discoverable and must be handled in accordance with this General Order. At no time will original images be deleted from any department storage media. All images from the compact flash storage media shall be transferred into the VeriPic System.

## **Alteration of Images**

There will be no manipulation or alteration of original evidentiary photographs either by the employee who took them or by any member of the Department. A copy of an original evidentiary photograph may be altered, but only in the following manner:

- Enlarged to show a small detail of the original picture, and/or
- Be lightened or brightened to bring out details that were not visible because the original photo was too dark; lightening or brightening must be done to the entire picture, and/or
- Focus adjusted to allow details of the photo to become clearer; focus adjustment must be done to the entire picture, and/or
- Colors adjusted to show true representative colors; color adjustment must be done to the entire picture.

All alterations made to a copy of the original evidentiary photograph will be documented, explaining what was done, by whom, and in what order. The original version of the evidentiary photograph will be included with the altered one when either printed or copied to a computer storage medium.

## **Distribution of Images**

Digital evidentiary photographs may not be copied, printed, or used for personal or non-departmental use without written permission from the Chief of Police.

All digital photographs designated for use in a court case or similar situation will be processed through the VeriPic system prior to being printed or copied to another computer storage medium in order to ensure authentication of their unaltered state.

No evidentiary digital photographs will be stored by and/or transmitted to other individuals. No evidentiary digital photographs will be posted on the Internet without written consent of the Chief of Police or his designee. Utilization of any method or means for transferring evidentiary digital photographic data (downloading or uploading) electronically is also prohibited. The only exception will be existing procedures and/or future electronic advances that will allow the Evidence or Investigative Division to transmit data securely and confidentially to and from appropriate entities.

## **Training on Use of VeriPic System Software**

All digital photographs to be downloaded into the computer will be processed through the VeriPic Digital Picture Authentication software located on a number of computers within the Department. Only those employees who have been trained, and are entered as users in the VeriPic system will be allowed to download digital photographs from the camera into the computer file folder. Employees trained to use the digital camera but not trained in the VeriPic

system can have their photographs entered into the system by an authorized user. The person entering the pictures shall include in the notes for each picture the name of the person who actually took the pictures.

### **Training on Use of Department-Owned Digital Cameras**

Department-issued digital cameras are to be used only by those employees who are trained in their operation or who have knowledge of digital cameras from other sources.

### **Use of Digital Camera to Photograph Crime Scenes**

When conducting investigations where it has been determined that the Washoe County Sheriff's Office Forensic Science Division is not needed to process the scene and a departmental digital camera will be used, it is necessary to adhere to the following procedures:

1. The digital camera should be set on the Automatic mode for exposure, focus, and flash. The pixel setting should be set at the highest possible quality. The operator will additionally utilize the viewer to review the images and determine the necessity for additional photographs as needed.
2. The initial photograph for any investigation will be a photograph of the front side of the photo-log card. This card will contain information such as date and time, case number, incident type, location of incident, the name of the photographing officer, and the type of camera being used. More than one crime scene may be photographed using the same removable memory, but a photo log card must be completed for each scene/case.
3. Subsequent photographs should include general crime scene shots to document the location of the incident as well as document the appearance of the scene at the time the employee initiated his/her investigation. Depending upon the nature of the investigation, photographs should be taken of points of entry, other evidence indicating violence, or the presence of physical evidence, etc. When photographing physical evidence requiring close-up range, a scaled ruler or other object of known size should be laid next to the item to be photographed. This will aid in the ability to print such photographs in the proper size ratios.
4. As the photographic portion of a criminal investigation is being conducted, the employee will fill out the back of the photo log form noting the number of the picture being taken (1,2,3, etc.) , the time the photo was taken, and a brief description of what the photo shows and the location within the crime scene. The original copy of the photo log is to be turned in as part of the original crime report.

### **Digital Image Processing**

Requests for prints or copies of digital images files shall be made in e-mail form to the Reno Police Department Evidence Division. Justification for the request will be required. The exception shall be those employees designated as having the highest access authority within the VeriPic System.

A request for prints from digital image files shall be completed as soon as the need is known. It is preferred that the request be made at least one week in advance of the date needed.

If numerous images are obtained in a case, the requesting officer shall be provided a sheet of thumbnails prints from which to make a selection. Not all photographs must be printed in every case. Which photos are required may be dictated by the request of the prosecuting authority. Requesters other than departmental employees seeking crime-scene images must follow the procedures currently in place, and obtain proper authorization before any images are released.

### **Administrator for Downloaded Digital Photographs**

An Investigator or Sergeant within the Detective Division and/or an Information Services employee will be the designated VeriPic Administrator(s). This administrator will be responsible for entering authorized users into the VeriPic system and maintaining the system by making arrangements with the appropriate people for updating the system. The VeriPic Administrator will also be responsible for setting the correct security level for each user, based upon the needs of the employee's assignment. Security level options are as follows:

1. Authorized View Security Level
2. Authorized Edit Security Level
3. Authorized Create Security Level