

## **814 COMPUTERS AND DIGITAL EVIDENCE**

### **814.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE**

This policy establishes procedures for the seizure and storage of computers and other electronic devices, digital cameras and recorders that are capable of storing digital information. This policy also establishes procedures for the preservation and storage of digital evidence.

### **814.2 SEIZING COMPUTERS AND RELATED EVIDENCE**

Computer equipment requires specialized training and handling to preserve its value as evidence. If it is anticipated that computer evidence or equipment will be seized, officers should request that certified computer forensic examiners assist them in seizing computers and related evidence. Officers should be aware of the potential to destroy information through careless or improper handling and should utilize the most knowledgeable resources available.

#### **814.2.2 FORENSIC EXAMINATION OF COMPUTERS**

If an examination of the contents of the computer's hard drive, external drives, compact discs or any other storage media is required, certain items should be forwarded to a computer forensic examiner.

### **814.3 SEIZING DIGITAL STORAGE MEDIA**

Digital storage media, including hard drives, floppy disks, CDs, DVDs, tapes, memory cards or flash memory devices, should be seized and stored in a manner that will protect them from damage.

### **814.4 SEIZING PERSONAL COMMUNICATION DEVICES**

Personal communication devices (PCDs) such as cellular telephones, personal digital assistants (PDAs) or other handheld devices must be handled with care to preserve evidence that may be on the device, including messages, stored data and/or images.

### **814.5 RETURN OF SEIZED STORAGE MEDIA**

Contraband, including illegal images, stored on digital storage media (hard drives, floppy disks, CDs, DVDs, tapes, memory cards, flash memory devices, PCDs and PDAs or other handheld devices) shall be removed by a computer forensic examiner or other qualified personnel prior to return to the owner.

### **814.6 DIGITAL EVIDENCE RECORDED BY OFFICERS**

Officers handling and submitting recorded and digitally stored evidence from digital cameras and audio or video recorders will comply with these procedures to ensure the integrity and admissibility of the evidence. Officers shall not create or maintain copies of digital evidence outside of the work environment.

# COLUMBIA POLICE DEPARTMENT

## Policy Manual

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### **814.6.1 COLLECTION OF DIGITAL EVIDENCE**

Once evidence is recorded it shall not be erased, deleted or altered in any way prior to submission. All photographs taken will be preserved regardless of quality, composition or relevance. Video and audio files will not be altered in any way.

### **814.6.2 SUBMISSION OF DIGITAL MEDIA**

The recording media (smart card, compact flash card or any other media) shall be brought to the Evidence Unit as soon as possible for submission into evidence or uploaded pursuant to department procedures.