POL00104866

Royal Mail Internal Information
Criminal Investigation Team

Appendix 2 to 6.1 Securing Digital and VHS Tape CCTV Images for Evidential Purposes

Version 1.0 Final

February 2011

Review Date: February 2013

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Key Accountabilities

Who is accountable?	What do I have to do?	When do I have to do this?	How do I do this?
All members of Royal Mail Security	Ensure you comply with these procedures	Ongoing	As detailed within these procedures

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Securing Digital and VHS CCTV Images for Evidential Purposes

1. Introduction

1.1 Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) images often provide compelling evidence of theft. These procedures describe how to effectively preserve the integrity of the images and present the evidence in Court.

1.2 Within Royal Mail we use both Digital Video Recorders (DVR) and Video Home System (VHS) Tape Recorders. Section 3 deals with the procedures in respect of DVR images and Section 4 deals with VHS video tape.

2. General

2.1 Integrity of CCTV Images. When using CCTV systems Investigators should ensure that the time and date data on the system is correct. They should also ensure that they make notes detailing their actions in respect of recording CCTV images.

2.2 Copying and Editing Recording Media. The Prosecution Support Office (PSO) has the ability to copy; 1) DVD to DVD, 2) DVD to VHS tape, 3) VHS tape to DVD or 4) VHS tape to VHS tape. They also have the ability to produce edited highlights as directed by the Investigator or the Criminal Law Team (CLT). Requests for copying or editing media should be submitted to the PSO with a completed GS307 Copying and Editing Request form detailing the exact requirements.

3. Producing Digital Video Recorded (DVR) Images

3.1 We have a variety of DVR systems within the Royal Mail (RM) estate. Unfortunately not all the systems record digital data using the same software "file format". Some of the software formats are specific to the particular manufacturers of the DVR equipment and as such they are not "recognised" when playback is attempted on an Investigator's RM Personal Computer (PC). The generic name for these "original" file formats is the "Native File Format".

3.2 The majority of Business DVR systems record on a 14 day cycle, recording 24hrs a day. The images recorded are downloaded on to a hard drive within the CCTV system. After 14 days it over records the first day and so on and so forth. It is possible to save data to the hard drive for an indefinite period, however the hard drive capacity is 14 days, so if any data is saved to the hard drive then the recording cycle will be reduced by the corresponding period of time.

3.3 Master Copies. The initial course of action is for Investigators to create master copies of the images that they intend to rely on as evidence of the offence(s) and also all the images recorded which are relevant material and as such should be disclosed as unused material. Master copies should be produced in the **native file format** as this ensures evidential integrity and picture quality. It also represents the "Best Evidence" available. Some systems may give the option to download the images in a format that is playable on "Windows" configured computer, however this often requires the video to be recompressed, resulting in a loss of quality. In addition, when transferring from the native file format the "Metadata", which includes the date and time, may also be lost.

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3.4 Unused Material. It is only necessary to create master copies of images reviewed by an Investigator which may be relevant. That is to say any images which appear to an Investigator to have some bearing on any offence under investigation or any person being investigated or on the surrounding circumstances, unless it is incapable of having any impact on the case. The following are some examples of relevant material;

3.4.1 Images of the suspect handling "Test" items.

3.4.2 Any images of the suspect handling mail at times when specific losses have been reported.

3.4.3 Any reviewed images where the suspect is seen to act suspiciously.

3.4.4 Any reviewed images which demonstrate that the suspect omitted to do anything which is relevant (for example, images showing that a suspect did not visit the broken packet duty).

3.5 Obtaining the Images - Checklist. Investigators should obtain master and working copies of DVDs using the checklist below;

3.5.1 **Contemporaneous Notes.** Must be made detailing any action taken to recover evidential material.

3.5.2 **Time Check.** The time displayed by the DVR system should be checked against that given by the speaking clock. Any error between the system time and real time should be recorded and compensated for when conducting the retrieval. This will ensure that the correct section of data is copied.

3.5.3 **Note the Make and Model.** Record the details of the DVR system, and if possible establish the type of native file format used.

3.5.4 **Determine Which Camera Views Are Required.** It is good practice to draw a plan of the camera views to establish which views need to be recorded. Some systems permit video from individual cameras to be downloaded, but some do not, in which case data from all cameras will need to be taken.

3.5.5 **Replay Data and Produce Master Copies.** Check that the relevant images exist on the system. If they do, produce a master copy in the native file format.

3.5.6 **Confirm Success of Retrieval.** Confirm that the data has been copied. If possible replay the images on a PC. If unable to replay the data on a PC attempt to replay the data using the master copy disc on the DVR system. (If unable to confirm retrieval ensure that all the relevant images are stored on to the DVR system hard drive until confirmation can be made). Master Copies of evidence which the investigator intends to rely on should be sealed using a Master Tape Seal GS022. There is no requirement to seal unused material.

3.5.7 **Produce Working copies.** Working copies of evidential DVDs should then be made. Depending on which particular DVR system has been used to record the images will depend on which procedure is to be followed.

a) Native File Format Playable on RM PC. Produce working copies locally.

b) System has Conversion Software. Some systems have internal software which will convert the native file format to a file playable on a RM PC (Windows compatible software, for example Windows Media Player). If the quality acceptable and "Metadata" is present again produce working copies locally. If the quality is unacceptable then follow option c) or d) below.

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c) **Software Available for Download from the DVR system.** Some systems will allow software programmed in the DVR to be downloaded on to a disc for uploading onto a PC. This software will enable the PC to read the native file format. However as Investigators are not given administrator rights on their RM PC then they will be unable to upload the conversion software. If this is the case the working copies of the relevant material in native file format along with a copy of the conversion software should be sent to the PSO for copying. The PSO have "stand alone" computers which can upload the conversion software and produce appropriate playable working copies for the Investigator. (Submissions to the PSO need to be accompanied by a completed GS307 detailing exactly what is required).

d) **Unplayable Native File Format with no Conversion Software.** In such cases the working copies of the DVDs should be forwarded to the PSO. The Investigator must supply them with the make, model and native file format name for the relevant DVR system. The PSO will make arrangements to obtain the relevant conversion software and return playable copies to the Investigator.

3.6 Investigators must ensure that the CLT receive DVD copies of all the evidence, in a format which can be played on a RM PC, of the same quality as the master copy. There is no requirement to supply the CLT with a copy of the unused material, unless it is specially requested but a description of the footage should be detailed on the Schedules of Unused Material if relevant.

3.7 The sealed master copies of the evidence which support the charges (not the unused material) should be produced in the Investigator's statement. Working copies should be available at Court to be played as required on a standard PC.

4. Producing VHS Tape Images

4.1 Again the priority is to decide what VHS tape images will be used as evidence to support the prosecution and what images need to be retained as unused material. As far as unused material is concerned again it is relevant material as described in paragraph 3.4 above. However, as there is not the same resource implication of downloading digital images and producing copies, a practical approach would be to keep all video tapes which feature the suspect during the course of their duties and other images which are relevant, such as footage which demonstrate that a suspect omitted to carry out an action that they should have.

4.2 The original recorded tape becomes the master copy. The "lugs" in the cassette box should be removed to prevent accidental over-recording. Again, working copies of evidential master tapes have to be supplied to the CLT of a quality that is consistent with the master copies. Copies of the unused material need only be supplied to the CLT if they specifically request it but it is expected that a description of the footage will be listed on the Schedules of Unused Material if they are required.

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Change Control

Status	Draft
Version	1.0
Owner	Ray Pratt
Author	Michael F Matthews
Release Date	February 2011
Document Privacy	Internal

Authorisation

Title	Name	Signature	Date
Security	Ray Pratt		February 2011

Distribution List

Name	Version	Date
All Royal Mail Security via Security Sharepoint	V1	Feb 2011

Documentation History

Issue	V.1				
Status	Draft				
Release Date	Feb 2011				
Effective From	Feb				

Document Change History

Issue / Version	Summary of Change
V1	Document Produced

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Glossary

Abbreviation or Term	Meaning
CCTV	Closed Circuit Television
DVR	Digital Video Recorder
VHS	Video Home System
PSO	Prosecution Support Office
CLT	Criminal Law Team

Document Summary

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