

WEBER COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE		POLICY AND PROCEDURES	
SUBJECT: Seizure of Computer Equipment		CHAPTER/SECTION NO.: 55.9	
EFFECTIVE DATE: 10/7/03		REVIEW DATE:	
AMENDS/SUPERSEDES: See attached sheet		APPROVED: <u>** See Master File</u> Sheriff	
STANDARD NUMBER: 83.2.5			

55.9 Procedure

- 55.9.1 Computer equipment can be severely damaged or data lost due to improper shutdown procedures by deputies seizing or accessing computer equipment during the course of an investigation.
- 55.9.2 The Weber County Sheriff's Office shall assign a Sheriff's Office Management Integrated Systems Technician as the on-call advisor to the Crime Scene Investigations Unit (CSI) when an investigation involves the seizure of computer hardware and software in operation, non-operating equipment, disks, drives, and peripheral equipment and software.
- 55.9.3 Deputies involved in the seizure of computer equipment and software during an investigation should contact CSI regarding seizure of the equipment.
- 55.9.4 If an investigation involves the examination of computer files for evidence (Forensic Computer Examination) the State of Utah Forensics Computer Lab located at the State Department of Public Safety Criminal Investigations Bureau in Salt Lake City, may be contacted at (801)284-6200 regarding procedures to be used and/or examination of the equipment, files and software. Equipment to be examined will usually be taken to the State Forensics Computer Lab for examination, or held for examination at a secure location.

- A. Computer equipment, software and files may be examined by forensic computer examiners at the site of the search; or copied by examiners and transported to the forensics lab for examination.
- B. If the examination is going to be conducted by Office personnel, care should be taken to insure that the privacy rights of the search subject/s are not violated. Information regarding communications with attorneys or other matters that may be private under State or Federal Laws should be discussed with prosecutors before an in-depth examination by the investigator.

55.9.5 In all cases proper investigatory and search and seizure procedures and policies must be followed. Seizure of computer hardware and search or seizure of information stored by the hardware are two different elements which must be addressed in any search/seizure and/or search warrant application. Prosecutors should be consulted regarding such applications as well as Federal and State Laws governing searches and seizures of hardware and stored information.

55.9.6 When computer equipment is going to be seized the basic procedures to be followed are:

- A. **DO NOT EXIT, INITIATE COMPUTER SHUTDOWN PROCEDURES OR ACCESS PROGRAMS, OR TURN THE POWER OFF FROM THE ELECTRICAL WALL OUTLET OR POWER STRIP.**
- B. Photograph the rear wiring connections of the CPU(power, monitor, speakers, zip drive etc).
- C. Make a diagram of the wiring, identifying by number the individual connections and purpose.
- D. Confirm if the computer is on or off (move the mouse if the monitor screen appears to be off, in order to activate the screen).

- E. If a document is open (appears on the screen) verify if it may be evidence that should be saved or documented. Take a picture of or document the content and save it to a floppy disk.
- F. After steps A through E have been taken, **DO NOT INITIATE NORMAL COMPUTER SHUTDOWN PROCEDURES**. Instead, disconnect the computer by removing the power plug **FIRST**, from the connecting point at the **BACK** of the computer panel. This procedure will disconnect power that may be connected to a USP (Uninterrupted power source) and the wall outlet or power strip; and cuts power to the computer without adversely affecting programs in operation.
 - 1. To discontinue power on a lap top computer follow instructions in step F but also remove the battery from the unit battery compartment, being careful not to inadvertently touch power buttons.
 - 2. Lap top computers may also be connected to external disk drives which should be seized along with the hardware.
- G. Remove all other connections.
- H. Seize all related equipment, disks, and papers. Pay particular attention to papers or documents that may have password information or other information related to the crime being investigated or other crimes.
- I. Follow all other procedures related to evidence labeling, identification, handling and processing instructions, and chain of evidence. The equipment should be carefully handled, boxed or packaged to prevent damage and transported for entry into evidence at the Weber County Sheriff's Office.
 - 1. **DO NOT TRANSPORT EQUIPMENT IN THE TRUNK OF A VEHICLE OR IN VEHICLES WITHOUT SUFFICIENT CUSHIONING SUPPORT. THE BACK**

SEAT WILL USUALLY SUFFICE FOR SAFE
TRANSPORT OF EQUIPMENT.