



# MARION POLICE DEPARTMENT

## INTERNAL PROPOSAL

### **Memo**

**Date:** July 2, 2007  
**To:** David Gilbert, Chief of Police  
**From:** Cliff Sessoms, Deputy Chief of Police  
**Subject:** Proposal for Switching from Film Base Photography to Digital Images

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this proposal is to determine if our department should consider switching from film based cameras to digital cameras.

### **Summary**

The one piece of evidence that is most critical when documenting a crime scene is the photograph. A well photographed scene will show what the officer observed when he or she arrived, and greatly reduces any questions when it comes to prosecuting the case.

As you are aware, we currently have 72 officers of which 48 are assigned to the uniform division. After completing a recent inventory it was determined we currently have only seventeen digital cameras, most of which are assigned to the Criminal Investigations Division.

What you may not be aware of is that we are still using mostly film based cameras in our uniform division, with three shifts sharing 6 cameras.

Since this is not an issue where we can simply change the procedure without first investigating the cost and legal consequences, a thorough investigation will be necessary to determine which system is best for our department and the legal ramifications as it relates to prosecuting the cases in court.

Since this topic will involve the entire department, the team working on this proposal will include Deputy Chief Sessoms, Captain Kay, and Lt Loftin. If this proposal is accepted then the equipment can be purchased immediately and the new cameras issued by September 1, 2007.

## **Introduction**

As an organization that is responsible to provide the best possible product to our customers – the citizens of Marion, we are working on a plan that would potentially enable us to switch from film based photography to digital photography.

Currently we use a mixture of both 35mm cameras and digital cameras. Nearly all the digital cameras are assigned to the Criminal Investigations Division, while the Uniform

Division shares a few cameras across three shifts. This creates the problem of accountability for the equipment, lost manpower when two officers are sent to a crime scene which may only require one officer, and officers not taking photographs when they should.

The current use of film based cameras requires a staff officer to answer most calls in order to photograph the crime scene. This presents a problem when there is only one staff officer working and he or she must respond to multiple scenes at the same time. If each officer has his or her own camera, then they would be responsible for photographing and collecting the evidence. Another issue with the film based camera is the cost involved with processing and storing the film. Finally, one legal issue as it relates to chain of custody is what procedure must be followed to ensure digital photographs are not manipulated in any way. In the remainder of this proposal we will discuss the proposed task, the schedule, our qualifications, the proposed budget, and references.

## **Proposed Tasks**

1. *Investigate the cost advantages of switching to a digital photograph system.*

We will take into consideration the current cost of film and the processing of the film, along with the manpower required to take the film to the developer and making sure the processed film is delivered to the prosecutor's office. A recent check of this

account indicates we are averaging \$500 a month in film cost and another \$350 a month to develop the film. We will compare these figures to the cost of storing the photographs on digital media such as CD'S or DVD'S and the savings involved in e-mailing the photographs to the prosecutor's office. Finally, as administrators who must be good stewards of the taxpayers dollars, we must also consider what one forensic expert stated, "cost is always a consideration when making a decision to replace one tool with another, but the real questions that need to be answered are: What is the most effective tool for the job at hand? What are the consequences of that decision?" (Berg, par. 5).

*2. Research the proper chain of custody procedure for handling digital photographs.*

We will research the proper procedure for handling digital photographs and develop a standard operating procedure that all officers will be required to follow when using digital photography to document evidence. As a guide and reference we will survey other departments that are currently using digital photography and in the course of this project we will make reference to an article titled as *Legal Ramifications of Digital Imaging in Law Enforcement* written by Erik Berg, who is a forensics supervisor with the Tacoma Police Department.

3. *Identify the training requirements for all officers.*

If the decision is made to switch to digital photography then all officers will be required to attend two hours of training on how to use the new camera, along with instructions on the standard operating procedure for handling digital photographs.

4. *Research what camera and accessories will be the most cost effective and ease of use.*

Prior to purchasing new equipment we will compare different cameras to determine which camera will be best for photographing a crime scene. Several things that must be taken into consideration is the number of mega pixels, optical zoom capability, and ease of use. Moreover, we will consider the cost of rechargeable batteries and the cost of the camera.

5. *Prepare a final report.*

After we have completed our investigation and we are sure all the listed questions have been answered, we will complete a final report which will be submitted to you for your recommendation and final authorization.

## **Schedule**

We estimate that the total time required to research this topic and present a report to your office will be about one week.

## **Experience**

We bring a total of fifty-seven years of combined experience in law enforcement and crime scene investigation to the project.

- Deputy Chief Sessoms has 20 years of experience in law enforcement, including 5 years in Criminal Investigations, 7 years in operations and equipment purchasing.
- Captain Kay has 7 years of experience in law enforcement, including 16 years in Criminal Investigations.
- Lt. Loftin brings 10 years of experience in law enforcement including 3 years in training and equipment purchasing.

## **Budget**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Hours</b>	<b>Hourly Rate</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Cliff Sessoms	20	\$20	\$400
Jay Kay	5	\$18	\$90
James Loftin	10	\$15	\$150
		Total:	\$640

Memo to David Gilbert  
July 6, 2007  
Page 7

## **References**

United States. Dept. of Justice. *Legal Ramifications of Digital Imaging in Law*

*Enforcement*: By Eric C. Berg. Oct. 2000. 2 July. 2007

<<http://www.fbi.gov/hq/lab/fsc/backissu/oct2000/berg.htm>>.