

# Handling and Storage of Sensitive Material by SOCO Outside of Police Premises



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## Section 1 – Policy Intentions

- 1.1 This policy provides clear guidance to all operational Scenes of Crime Officers (SOCOs) and Scenes of Crime resources, on the handling and storage of sensitive information and exhibits outside of Police premises.
- 1.2 This policy demonstrates the organisational recognition of the risk of information loss, due to digital devices, paperwork and physical exhibits being left unattended in a SOCO Vehicle, either during a SOCO's attendance at a scene, or whilst vehicles are parked outside a SOCO's home address overnight, and the measures in place to mitigate such risk
- 1.3 This policy sets out the expectations in relation to the actions of the individual Scenes of Crime staff, and the measures put in place to mitigate the risk of information loss.

## Section 2 – Policy wording

2.1 Scenes of Crime Officers are required to carry a number of media devices, including Police issue Personal Airwaves Radios; Mobile Devices; Laptop Computers; Digital Media Storage (memory cards, for use in digital cameras) which could contain, or be used to access sensitive information, as part of their day to day role.

2.2 Scenes of Crime Officers may also be required to carry physical printouts of documents, which may contain sensitive information: Such as printouts of Storm incident logs; printouts of forensic strategy documents and copies of handwritten notes made in relation to scene examinations and other operational matters.

2.3 Scenes of Crime Officers will often recover evidence during their examinations of crime scenes. This could be in the form of physical exhibits which will be labelled with information making them identifiable to the case (e.g. fingerprint lifts, items for fingerprint examination, DNA samples, items for DNA examination, footwear lifts and/or control samples) or digital exhibits (e.g. scene photographs captured using a digital camera, but temporarily stored in multi-use memory cards).

2.4 Scenes of Crime Officers will be cognizant of information security, and incorporate this into their working practices.

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2.5 Paperwork containing sensitive information shall either be appropriately stored (e.g. handwritten notes) or destroyed (e.g. Storm Incident Log Prints and Prints of Forensic Strategy) upon return to the SOCO Office, or another Police premise.

2.5 Physical exhibits shall be suitably stored upon return to the office, either within Forensic Services (where they will be recorded under the Socrates reference) or in the Central Property System (where they will be record on GCIS / Holmes).

2.6 Digital exhibits will be suitably stored as per local policy upon return to the office (where they will be stored under the Socrates reference).

2.7 However, due to the nature of their role, Scenes of Crime Officers regularly do not return to the office following every scene attendance, and as as such they will continue to carry and store media devices, paperwork, physical exhibits and digital exhibits in their vehicles, until they next return to the office. This could be pending one or more attendances at further crime scenes, or it could be overnight, as they may take a vehicle and park it outside their home address, before starting from home when they return to duty the following day. This is to facilitate a better response time to operational incidents.

2.8 Through a combination of process, and individual diligence, we aim to reduce the risks involved with such activity, without disruption to the work of the Scenes of Crime Officers, so that we minimise the risk of loss of information / evidence, and the risk of resultant reputational damage.

2.9 The benefits of allowing SOCOs to store materials in their vehicles are that Scenes of Crime Officers can:

- Travel from scene to scene, without having to return to the office in between every scene attendance, increasing the service to the public
  - Without the requirement to return to the office following every examination, SOCOs can attend more incidents during their working day, thus increasing the service we provide to the public.
  - If SOCOs had to return to the office between every scene attendance, scene attendances would likely be delayed, or potentially some incidents would not get attended.
  - Supporting the OPCC's Priority of a Green and Pleasant County, by reducing needless additional mileage
- Attend scenes when called out, and not have to travel back to the office following the examination of the scene, when there is not a need to do so, and therefore:
  - Reducing the impact on the individual, by minimising the time they are working and travelling during the call out, and so reducing fatigue and promoting staff welfare.
  - Reducing the impact to the organisation, by minimising the amount of paid overtime, and potentially any resultant abstraction the following day.
  - Supporting the OPCC's Priority of a Green and Pleasant County, by reducing needless additional mileage
- Attend scenes towards the end of their rostered shift, and not have to travel back to the office following the examination of the scene, when there is not a need to do so, and therefore:

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- Reducing the impact on the individual SOCO, by minimising the time they are working after their rostered finish time, and so reducing fatigue and promoting staff welfare.
- Reducing the impact on the organisation, by minimising the amount for paid overtime, and potentially the resultant abstraction the following day
- Supporting the OPCC's Priority of a Green and Pleasant County, by reducing needless additional mileage.
- Increasing the service to the public, as where attendance at such incidents does not warrant authorisation of paid overtime, the requirement to return to the office following the examination could mean that they cannot attend and complete this examination before their scheduled finish time, and such attendances would either be deferred until the following day, or potentially some indicants would not be attended.

### Section 3 – Procedural guides

#### 3.1 Digital Devices

##### 3.1.1 Personal Airwaves Radio

###### During Scene Attendance

Airwaves PRs should be carried on the SOCO whilst on duty, however there are times when the PR cannot be carried on the person (e.g. post mortem attendance, prison attendance, or discrete scene attendance).

Where a Airwaves PR cannot be worn, then it may be stored in the rear of a locked SOCO vehicle (not in the cab / in sight), however it should be ensured that the radio is switched off.

###### Overnight

When a vehicle is left unattended overnight, then the airwaves PR should be taken into the SOCO's address.

The exception to this would be, where the SOCO is unable to maintain the security of the item inside their address (e.g. a multi-occupany property with no ability to lock the doors), in which case it may be stored in the rear of a locked SOCO vehicle (not in the cab / in sight), however it should be ensured that the radio is switched off.

##### 3.1.2 Laptops

###### During Scene Attendance.

Force issue laptops are equipped with encryption, and a secure Windows front-end password restricting access to the Force systems.

Laptops cannot be carried into every scene, and as such it may be stored in the rear of a locked SOCO vehicle (not in the cab / in sight), however it should be ensured that the laptop is switched off when left unattended.

###### Overnight

When a vehicle is left unattended overnight, then the laptop should be taken into the SOCO's address.

The exception to this would be, where the SOCO is unable to maintain the security of the item inside their address (e.g. a multi-occupancy property with no ability to lock the doors), in which case it may be stored in the rear of a locked SOCO vehicle (not in the cab / in sight), however it should be ensured that the laptop is switched off when left unattended.

### **3.1.3 Mobile Devices (Mobile Phones and/or Tablets)**

Force issue mobile phones / tablets are equipped with built in encryption, requiring either password entry or biometrics to gain access.

#### **During Scene Attendance**

Mobile devices cannot always be carried on the person, either due to the size of the device (the tablets are 10" and cannot be held in a pocket), or the nature of the environment you are entering (e.g. post mortem attendance, prison attendance or discrete scene attendance).

Where a device cannot be carried on the person, then it may be stored in the rear of a locked SOCO vehicle (not in the cab), and the device should either be locked and set to silent, or turned off.

#### **Overnight**

When a vehicle is left unattended overnight, then the mobile device should be taken into the SOCO's address.

The exception to this would be, where the SOCO is unable to maintain the security of the item inside their address (e.g. a multi-occupancy property with no ability to lock the doors), in which case it may be stored in the rear of a locked SOCO vehicle (not in the cab / in sight), and the device should be turned off.

### **3.1.4 Memory Cards (SD Cards / Compact Flash Cards)**

Force issue memory cards are not encrypted, as the technology does not currently exist for the capture of images onto an encrypted storage medium.

Memory Cards are personal issue to the individual SOCO. Once the contents have been transferred onto the appropriate long terms storage medium they are subject to a deep digital forensic clean and are formatted after every usage. As such, there is no risk of information loss from memory cards, until the point they are used during a scene attendance.

Once memory cards have been used, they will then hold potentially sensitive data, or material that could be distressing to the public.

#### **During Scene Attendance**

While used memory cards containing sensitive data can be carried on the person, even when carried in a case there is a risk of them being accidentally dropped or lost whilst in a scene or in another public area.

As such, it is down to the individual SOCO to make an informed decision as to whether used memory cards (containing sensitive data) are best stored upon their person, or whether they are stored in the rear of a locked SOCO vehicle (not in the cab / in sight).

### **Overnight**

When a vehicle is left unattended overnight, then the memory cards should be taken into the SOCO's address.

The exception to this would be, where the SOCO is unable to maintain the security of the item inside their address (e.g. a multi-occupany property with no ability to lock the doors), in which case it may be stored in the rear of a locked SOCO vehicle (not in the cab / in sight).

### **3.1.5 Digital Cameras**

The digital SLR cameras used by SOCO do not store information. Whilst they have no memory card inserted, or an unusued 'clean' memory card inserted, there is no risk of information loss.

Any direction over the handling or storage of the camera is down to local procedures and practice regarding how it is treated as piece of equipment, rather than as an information security risk.

Used memory cards containining sensitive data should not be left within the DSLR camera following the conclusion of the examination. The memory cards should be removed from the camera and should be handled as per Section 3.1.4.

Where another camera is used (e.g. a point and click camera, where the memory card remains with the camera, or a camera with integral storage) then the camera and memory card within should be handled as per Section 3.1.4

## **3.2 Printed Paperwork and Handwritten Notes**

### **During Scene Attendance**

While paperwork containing sensitive data can be carried on the person, there is a risk of them being accidentally dropped or lost, while in a scene or in another public area.

As such, it is down to the individual SOCO to make an informed decision as to whether items of paperwork are best stored upon their person, or whether they are stored in the rear of a locked SOCO vehicle (not in the cab / in sight).

### **Overnight**

When a vehicle is left unattended overnight, then the paperwork should be taken into the SOCO's address.

The exception to this would be, where the SOCO is unable to maintain the security of the item inside their address (e.g. a multi-occupany property with no ability to lock the doors), in which case it may be stored in the rear of a locked SOCO vehicle (not in the cab / in sight).

## **3.3 Exhibits**

The guidance below only refers to the security aspect around each exhibit, and not the scope for degradation or loss of evidence, which could be caused by extended storage in a vehicle following seizure.

**3.3.1 The following items should not be left unattended in vehicle, and the SOCO should return to the office to book them in before proceeding to another scene / going home:**

- Restricted Firearms and Ammunition
- Drugs
- Cash (significant seizures)
- Post Mortem Samples / Human Tissues Act (HTA) Material
- Key or Inceptive Evidence Relating to Serious or Major Crime (e.g. a suspected murder weapon)
- Hazardous Material (items which pose a significant chemical or biological hazard)

**3.3.2 The Following Items May Be Left Unattended In A Vehicle, Whilst In A Scene**

- Physical items of property or samples collected in relation to serious and volume crime.
- Fingerprint and footwear lifts in relation to serious and volume crime.

**3.3.3 The Following Items May Be Left Unattended In A Vehicle Overnight**

- Physical items of property or samples collected in relation to volume crime.
- Fingerprint and footwear lifts in relation to volume crime.

**3.4 Risk Mitigation Currently in Place**

3.4.1. The fleet of SOCO vans are modern vehicles with central locking and functional alarms. The rear window, which initially appears to be a point of weakness, has an additional security grate on the interior, to prevent access.

3.4.2 The vans are unmarked, and so cannot be readily identified as Police vehicles (though they may display a *SOCO On Call* sign in the windscreen, when parked outside a crime scene). This means they are unlikely to be targeted by those looking for material related to the Police when parked up overnight.

3.4.3 The area exhibits are stored in has no external windows and is an enclosed compartment on the offside of the vehicle.

3.4.4 Where exhibits are stored in the vehicle overnight, the exhibits would most likely only relate to volume crime offences.

3.4.5 Where the items in question are an item holding exceptional risk (a firearm / a quantity of drugs or cash / exhibits from serious crime), then the SOCO would return the physical items to SOCO before concluding (this would also encompass fragile evidence that had to be stored frozen / refrigerated)

3.4.6 The memory cards are only used once per job, and are subject to *deep cleaning* after every use.

3.4.7 SOCOs will ensure that passwords and/or Bitlocker codes are not written down and left stored with the devices (laptop / media device / airwaves PR).

### **3.5. Factors Which Influence Decision Making Over Storing Items In Vans, Either Whilst Attending a Scene, or When Parked Overnight**

- Where the van is being parked
  - Private Driveway
  - Gated Access
  - Public Car Park
  - On the Road
- How Long the Vehicle will be Parked For?
- What additional Security Measures Are In Play in the Area
  - Presence of Lighting / Security Lighting
  - Availability of CCTV Covering the Area
  - Availability of a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme
- What the impact would be of attending the office to drop off the exhibits to the SOCO Office (geographic proximity)
- What the risk is around the loss or theft of the material, being stored in the vehicle

#### **Section 4 - Relevant Legislation: (*Human rights/diversity/Health & Safety/any other specifics*)**

*Not applicable*

#### **Section 5 - Related References:**

*Not applicable*

**Section 6 - Identification, Monitoring and Review**

The Policy should enable consistent and effective decision making. Where operational or managerial circumstances require any decision making that would adversely affect adherence to the policy or procedure, in line with the 'Statement of Intent' of the constabulary and the police service 'Code of Ethics', if an officer/ police staff member believes that they need to make a decision that steps outside of policy and procedure they should do so, provided that:

- the officer/ police staff member raises the matter at the earliest opportunity (and ideally before any such decision is made) with their line manager declaring their intended (or actual) course of action if notification is made after the decision is taken,
- produces, in a timely manner, a signed and dated written explanation of why it is/ was deemed necessary to step outside of policy and procedure, and
- maintain an adequate record of this written rationale for audit purposes appropriate to the circumstances/ contravention

<b>GSC Security Marking:</b>		<b>OFFICIAL/OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE</b>		
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<b>Link to EIA – G&amp;C to complete hyperlink action</b>				
<b>SIA – if required</b>		<b>SIA Sign Off</b>		<b>SIA Review</b>
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