Shipping Instructions for Digital Evidence

When shipping computers or electronic devices, a number of considerations must be made, especially if the devices might be of evidentiary value. This guide is not all-inclusive but it should remind the reader that electronic devices will be subjected to physical forces while in transit.

1 - Items should be photographed before the item is shipped. The physical condition of items should be documented prior to packaging. Documentation should include but is not limited to notes, sketches, and photographs. Any physical damage, such as dents or broken items, should be noted. The record of the device's condition or state will be very important in the event that it is damaged during shipment.

2 - Proper packaging is important when shipping electronic devices. Personal computers, either tower or laptop, should be double-boxed. For example, a laptop could be bubble-wrapped and placed in a smaller box and/or packed with shipping peanuts. The smaller box is then sealed up and placed in a larger box which is also filled with shipping peanuts or appropriate filler; do NOT use paper as filler when shipping computers. Paper compresses easily and the items could be bounced around during shipping.

3 - Evidence tape must be used on either or both boxes after the boxes have been sealed with shipping tape.

4 - If shipping an individual hard drive, the drive should be placed in an anti-static bag before proper packaging. A hard drive would not necessarily need to be double-boxed, but a generous use of bubble wrap and evidence tape is advised.

5 – When shipping mobile phones, ensure that the battery has been removed and include battery and any cables associated with the device.

6 – When shipping a global positioning system (GPS) device, ensure the device is OFF. Remove the battery if possible or if battery cannot be removed, wrap device in aluminum foil prior to packaging.

If you have questions, concerns, or comments, please contact Stuart Glasby at 912-344-3003/stuart.glasby@armstrong.edu or Joe Peny at 912-344-3521/joseph.peny@armstrong.edu.