

**SUPREME COURT OF PENNSYLVANIA
CRIMINAL PROCEDURAL RULES COMMITTEE
NOTICE OF PROPOSED RULEMAKING**

Proposed Amendments of Pa.R.Crim.P. 205

The Criminal Procedural Rules Committee is planning to propose to the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania the amendment of Rule 205 (Contents of Search Warrant) for the reasons set forth in the accompanying explanatory report. Pursuant to Pa.R.J.A. No. 103(a)(1), the proposal is being published in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin* for comments, suggestions, or objections prior to submission to the Supreme Court.

Any reports, notes, or comments in the proposal have been inserted by the Committee for the convenience of those using the rules. They neither will constitute a part of the rules nor will be officially adopted by the Supreme Court.

Additions to the text of the proposal are bolded and underlined; deletions to the text are bolded and bracketed.

The Committee invites all interested persons to submit comments, suggestions, or objections in writing to:

*Jeffrey M. Wasileski, Counsel
Supreme Court of Pennsylvania
Criminal Procedural Rules Committee
601 Commonwealth Avenue, Suite 6200
Harrisburg, PA 17106-2635
fax: (717) 231-9521
e-mail: criminalrules@pacourts.us*

All communications in reference to the proposal should be received by **no later than Friday, September 16, 2016**. E-mail is the preferred method for submitting comments, suggestions, or objections; any e-mailed submission need not be reproduced and resubmitted via mail. The Committee will acknowledge receipt of all submissions.

August 3, 2016

BY THE CRIMINAL PROCEDURAL RULES COMMITTEE:

*Charles A. Ehrlich
Chair*

RULE 205. CONTENTS OF SEARCH WARRANT.

(A) Each search warrant shall be signed by the issuing authority and shall:

- (1) specify the date and time of issuance;
- (2) identify specifically the property to be seized;
- (3) name or describe with particularity the person or place to be searched;
- (4) direct that the search be executed either;
 - (a) within a specified period of time, not to exceed 2 days from the time of issuance, or;
 - (b) when the warrant is issued for a prospective event, only after the specified event has occurred;
- (5) direct that the warrant be served in the daytime unless otherwise authorized on the warrant, *provided that*, for purposes of the rules of Chapter 200, Part A, the term "daytime" shall be used to mean the hours of 6 a.m. to 10 p.m.;
- (6) designate by title the judicial officer to whom the warrant shall be returned;
- (7) certify that the issuing authority has found probable cause based upon the facts sworn to or affirmed before the issuing authority by written affidavit(s) attached to the warrant; and
- (8) when applicable, certify on the face of the warrant that for good cause shown the affidavit(s) is sealed pursuant to Rule 211 and state the length of time the affidavit(s) will be sealed.

(B) A warrant under paragraph (A) may authorize the seizure of electronic storage media or of electronically stored information. Unless otherwise specified, the warrant authorizes a later review of the media or information consistent with the warrant. The time for executing the warrant in (A)(1)(4)(a) refers to the seizure of the media or information, and not to any later off-site copying or review.

COMMENT: Paragraphs **(A)**(2) and **(A)**(3) are intended to proscribe general or exploratory searches by requiring that searches be directed only towards the specific items,

persons, or places set forth in the warrant. Such warrants should, however, be read in a common sense fashion and should not be invalidated by hypertechnical interpretations. This may mean, for instance, that when an exact description of a particular item is not possible, a generic description may suffice. See *Commonwealth v. Matthews*, [446 Pa. 65, 69-74,] 285 A.2d 510, 513-14 (Pa. 1971).

Paragraph (A)(4) is included pursuant to the Court's supervisory powers over judicial procedure to supplement *Commonwealth v. McCants*, 450 Pa. 245, 299 A.2d 283 (1973), holding that an unreasonable delay between the issuance and service of a search warrant jeopardizes its validity. Paragraph (A)(4) sets an outer limit on reasonableness. A warrant could, in a particular case, grow stale in less than two days. If the issuing authority believes that only a particular period which is less than two days is reasonable, he or she must specify such period in the warrant.

Paragraph (A)(4)(b) provides for anticipatory search warrants. These types of warrants are defined in *Commonwealth v. Glass*, [562 Pa. 187,] 754 A.2d 655 (Pa. 2000), as “a warrant based upon an affidavit showing probable cause that at some future time (but not presently) certain evidence of crime will be located at a specified place.”

Paragraph (A)(5) supplements the requirement of Rule 203(C) that special reasonable cause must be shown to justify a nighttime search. A warrant allowing a nighttime search may also be served in the daytime.

Paragraph (A)(6) anticipates that the warrant will list the correct judicial officer to whom the warrant should be returned. There may be some instances in which the judicial officer who issues the warrant may not be the one to whom the warrant will be returned. For example, it is a common practice in many judicial districts to have an “on-call” magisterial district judge. This “on-call” judge would have the authority to issue search warrants anywhere in the judicial district but may not be assigned to the area in

which the search warrant would be executed. There may be cases when the warrant is incorrectly returned to the judge who originally issued the warrant. In such cases, the issuing judge should forward the returned search warrant to the correct judicial officer. Thereafter, that judicial officer should administer the search warrant and supporting documents as provided for in these rules, including the Rule 210 requirement to file the search warrant and supporting documents with the clerk of courts.

Paragraph **(A)**(8) implements the notice requirement in Rule 211(C). When the affidavit(s) is sealed pursuant to Rule 211, the justice or judge issuing the warrant must certify on the face of the warrant that there is good cause shown for sealing the affidavit(s) and must also state how long the affidavit will be sealed.

For purposes of this rule, the term “electronically stored information” includes writings, drawings, graphs, charts, photographs, sound recordings, images, and other data or data compilations stored in any medium from which information can be obtained. This definition is intended to cover all current types of computer-based information and to encompass future changes and developments.

For purposes of this rule, the term “seizure” includes the copying of material or information that is subject to the search warrant. This includes the copying of electronically stored information for later analysis.

For the procedures for motions for return of property, see Rule 588.

NOTE: Rule 2005 adopted October 17, 1973, effective 60 days hence; amended November 9, 1984, effective January 2, 1985; amended September 3, 1993, effective January 1, 1994; renumbered Rule 205 and amended March 1, 2000, effective April 1, 2001; amended October 19, 2005, effective February 1, 2006; *Comment* revised October 22, 2013, effective January 1, 2014 [.] ; **amended _____, 2016, effective _____, 2016.**

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COMMITTEE EXPLANATORY REPORTS:

Report explaining the September 3, 1993 amendments published at 21 Pa.B. 3681 (August 17, 1991).

Final Report explaining the March 1, 2000 reorganization and renumbering of the rules published with the Court's Order at 30 Pa.B. 1478 (March 18, 2000).

Final Report explaining the October 19, 2005 amendments to paragraph (4) and the Comment published with the Court's Order at 35 Pa.B. 6088 (November 5, 2005).

Final Report explaining the October 22, 2013 revisions to the Comment regarding the return of the search warrant published at 43 Pa.B. 6649 (November 9, 2013).

Report explaining the proposed amendment regarding the search warrants for electronically stored information published for comment at 46 Pa.B. (, 2016).

REPORT

Proposed amendment of Pa.R.Crim.P. 205

SEARCH WARRANTS FOR ELECTRONICALLY STORED INFORMATION: COPYING AND LATER REVIEW

The Committee has recently examined a suggestion from one of its members to amend Rule 205 (Contents of Search Warrant) to clarify that electronic storage data may be seized or copied for later analysis. This suggestion was based on language that is contained currently in Federal Rule of Criminal Procedure 41(B). The intention of the proposed amendment is to eliminate any confusion that, when a search warrant is for the seizure of electronically stored information and that information must be extracted, reviewed or analyzed, these additional processes do not need to be performed within the period set for execution of the search warrant.

The Committee examined the history of Federal Rule 41 and the specific provision related to electronic which reads:

(B) Warrant Seeking Electronically Stored Information. A warrant under Rule 41(e)(2)(A) may authorize the seizure of electronic storage media or the seizure or copying of electronically stored information. Unless otherwise specified, the warrant authorizes a later review of the media or information consistent with the warrant. The time for executing the warrant in Rule 41(e)(2)(A) and (f)(1)(A) refers to the seizure or on-site copying of the media or information, and not to any later off-site copying or review.

Federal Rule 41 (“the federal rule”) was amended in 2009 to add this provision regarding warrants for electronically stored information. Searches of electronic storage media are problematic because computers and external electronic storage devices contain an almost incomprehensible amount and variety of data. The use of computers in all stages of life and business has become ubiquitous. This is only further complicated by the storage of electronic data on networks and, with increasing frequency, “cloud” servers. Additionally, the information is stored as lines of code, often of little practical use without some type of program to convert into a usable form. As a result, it is often impossible to conduct a search on-site for evidence within the computer

or server and necessitating analysis by specialists. The federal rule was amended to recognize the need for a two-step process: officers either may seize or may copy the entire storage medium and conduct a review of the storage medium later to determine what electronically stored information falls within the scope of the warrant. The Committee recognizes that Pennsylvania search warrant procedures differ from federal procedures. However, the Committee concluded that the same concerns that prompted the change to the federal rule are applicable to search warrant practice in Pennsylvania and that a similar solution would be beneficial in Pennsylvania. For that reason, the language that the Committee is proposing to be added to Rule 205 is similar to that in the federal rule.

The term “electronically stored information” is derived from Rule 34(a) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, which states that it includes “writings, drawings, graphs, charts, photographs, sound recordings, images, and other data or data compilations stored in any medium from which information can be obtained.” The Committee concluded that this description is an apt one and is intended to cover all current types of computer-based information and to encompass future changes and developments.

The federal rule contains references to the “copying of electronically stored information” in addition to its “seizure.” The Committee believes that the term “seizure” used in a search warrant context encompasses the copying of the information and that to retain this terminology would unduly emphasize this single aspect. Therefore, the term “copying” is not used but a statement would be added to the Comment to ensure that it is understood that this is included in the “seizure” of the information.

As in the federal rule, the Committee rejected adding a specific a time period within which any subsequent off-site copying or review of the media or electronically stored information would take place. Given the vast divergence in the media being searched, there will be wide differences in the amount of time required for forensic analysis and review of information. The Committee concluded that if a time limit were set for these processes it would be highly arbitrary and result in frequent petitions for additional time.

One of the concerns raised during the development of the federal rule change was the ability of an aggrieved party to pursue the return of property associated with

electronic media. In the note to the 2009 change to the federal rule, it was observed that Federal Rule 41(g), which provides for a motion for return of property, applies to electronic storage media. Pennsylvania Rule 588 provides a similar motion for return. However, the only cross-reference in Chapter 2 that refers to Rule 588 is in the *Comment* to Rule 211 (Sealing of Search Warrant Affidavits). The Committee also proposes that a cross-reference to Rule 588 be added to the Rule 205 *Comment* to emphasize the availability of this remedy.