

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
DISTRICT OF MASSACHUSETTS**

**UPDATED NOTICE REGARDING
METADATA AND REDACTED INFORMATION IN PDF DOCUMENTS**

METADATA

Attorneys and *pro se* litigants are advised to exercise caution when creating Portable Document Format (PDF) documents for submission to the Court's Electronic Case Files (ECF) system. Steps must be taken to ensure that the documents are free of hidden data that may contain redacted information, or that traces of information that have been edited or deleted do not remain hidden in the final document. Even PDF content that has been encrypted can be recovered.

Users of the ECF system shall ensure that the PDF documents submitted to ECF are free of any hidden data which may contain redacted information.

To prevent a word processing program - Word or WordPerfect - from saving/recording changes and edits, the following steps are recommended. **Users are referred to the software manufacturer's help resources for definitive information.**

Microsoft Word

On the Review tab, select Track Changes Option and make the necessary modifications.

After completing the document, click on the yellow "Office" button on the top left corner of the screen, click on "Prepare" and then "Inspect Document." Inspect the document for any and all the choices available. Remove as appropriate.

Corel WordPerfect

Click on "Edit," then "Undo/Redo History." Click on "Options." Be sure that "Save Undo/Redo Items with Document" is not checked.

The file also may be saved without metadata by clicking on "File," then "Save without Metadata."

A common error in redacting information is to use the wrong method while trying to redact the electronic file.

Methods Not to Use

Changing the font to white (this only appears to make the words disappear)

Use of Adobe Acrobat graphic and commenting tools that can black-out, cover over or remove sections of text (these edits can be removed by anyone to reveal the text underneath)

Ink-marking or use of semi-translucent tape or paper to cover areas of a document to be scanned (your covered data may still show through, check your PDF document before it is filed)

REDACTING

Word Processing

The best way to redact a document is to not include the unwanted text initially.

If a document must be redacted or edited, use a simple-text editor (for example, use of Windows *Notepad* to create the final redacted version of the document. *Notepad* does not save any hidden code, as it only uses simple-text (.txt) format.

Redacting a Scanned File (tiff, jpeg, gif)

Removing metadata or redacted information is more difficult when dealing with an “image” or photo of a file. The data which contains that image may not be fully removed or destroyed using common software tools. Check the software’s support documentation to manipulate graphics to find if the tools offered are sufficient to redact a document.

Redacting a PDF File (scanned or converted)

This is the most delicate and difficult to do correctly. Adobe Acrobat (any version) by itself cannot redact a document using any of the built in tools. There are plug-ins (add-on software) for Adobe which can aid in redaction, such as Redax. In addition, consider printing the document and using the method for redacting a paper document, below.

Redacting a Paper Document

Before scanning the document, cut out (literally) all the text to be redacted and properly dispose of (shred) the clippings, or use opaque (100% impenetrable by light, neither transparent nor translucent) tape or paper to cover over the sections to be redacted. Do not use plain-paper as the scanner may pick up images through the paper.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For additional information refer to: (links current as of the date of this notice)

<http://www.fas.org/sgp/othergov/dod/nsa-redact.pdf>

<http://www.sti.nasa.gov/publish/redaction.pdf>

<https://www.uwec.edu/Help/Acrobat8/redact.htm>

http://www.pdfforallawyers.com/2005/05/pdf_redaction_s.html

http://www.computerworld.com.au/article/215187/recovering_pdf_redaction/?fp=4194304&fpid=1

NOTE: The Clerk’s Office staff are not experts on file metadata and other hidden text, and neither endorse nor guarantee any specific method to "sanitize" a document.

January 11, 2010

/s/ Sarah Allison Thornton

Clerk of Court