

## **USB DRIVES ARE INVESTIGATIVE TOOL FOR MAJOR CASE TEAM**

Using USB 3.0 flash drives cuts a suburban Chicago investigative team's image rendering processing time by half. That is just one reason USB flash drive technology makes sense to them.

The department began using USB drives about five years ago, said T. Todd of the department's Forensic Services Unit. They, like other departments, have found that data coming from investigative sources – particularly surveillance cameras, body cameras and squad car video – were too large to continue burning those files onto CD or DVD.

A 1G USB flash drive holds more data than a single CD. While DVDs can hold more data than CDs – about 4.7GB total – that memory is still too small for some uses.

### **Evidence takes memory**

It's not uncommon for a piece of video surveillance to fill an 8GB drive – one of the reasons he prefers the 32GB drives. It leaves no question on whether the data will fit, Todd said.

Todd also purchases USB flash drives for a multi-jurisdictional team formed to provide investigative and forensic assistance to member police agencies for homicides, serial crimes and major criminal events.

The team uses a diagramming program for 3D, 360-degree crime scene and accident reconstruction imaging. Those files can be very large and rendering them onto DVD can take as long as 1½ hours. Because of the time concern, Todd purchased 32GB USB 3.0 drives for the team. The 3.0 technology is 10x's faster than 2.0 drives – cutting the time to copy files in half (as long as the computer they are using also has 3.0 USB ports).

Todd still uses both DVDs and CDs for some digital evidence storage. But for evidence video and photos, it is simpler to put the information on thumb drives for the relevant State's Attorney offices, he said.

### **Chain of evidence**

Whether the data is on a CD/DVD or a USB drive makes no difference for the evidence chain of custody – as long as it is formatted and inventoried properly they work the same as any other storage medium. "They are easier to some degree because they are smaller and not as fragile as a DVD. It's also a quicker process to copy – drop and dragging the files onto USB vs. waiting for a DVD to burn," he said.