

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
DISTRICT OF MASSACHUSETTS**

**NOTICE REGARDING METADATA**

Counsel and others are advised to use caution when redacting documents in Portable Document Format (PDF) for submission to the Court's Electronic Case Files (ECF) system. Documents shall be free of any hidden data that may contain redacted information or traces of information that has been edited or deleted. Note that even PDF content that has been encrypted may sometimes be recovered.

A common error in redacting information is to use the wrong method while trying to redact the electronic file. Below is a partial list of methods NOT to use:

1. Changing the font to white. This method removes the text only superficially.
2. All word processing programs will retain hidden code and text (called "metadata") that can contain revision history and other information, unless programmed not to do so. This metadata can reveal anything that was contained in the file at any time, even text that was previously deleted or changed, even if the file was re-saved. This is a useful tool for tracking revisions, but if this information is not purged from the document, anyone can view this information, even after it has been converted to PDF.
3. Some PDF writers have graphic and commenting tools which can black-out, cover over or remove sections of text. These edits can be removed by anyone to reveal the text underneath.
4. Ink-marking or using semi-translucent tape or paper to cover areas of a document to be scanned sometimes will show enough information for someone to see what was assumed hidden, especially if that same data repeats a number of times across a document.

There are a number of software manufacturers that specialize in redaction of data. CM/ECF users are referred to their word processing or PDF writer software manufacturer for assistance.

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