

Crime data feared lost from Dallas police computer network

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Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

A massive amount of information on criminal cases dating to July 2020 has been lost from the Dallas Police Department computer database, authorities revealed on Wednesday.

In a statement, the Dallas County District Attorney's Office said the loss occurred in early April as the Dallas Police Department performed a

data migration from a computer network drive.

About 14 terabytes of the 22 terabytes lost were recovered, but the remaining eight terabytes are believed lost forever, according to the statement, and would have to be restored by new investigative work.

Most up-to-date personal computers have hard-drive memory capacities ranging from a half-terabyte to two terabytes.

City information technology officials became aware of the problem on April 5. The [police](#) and city IT departments did not reveal it to the district attorney's office until Friday, after prosecutors inquired why they could not find [computer files](#) on pending cases.

"My office is now working with the DPD to determine how many cases are affected by the city's data loss in April. It is possible that much of the missing evidence had already been uploaded to this office's data portal prior to April 5, which would have a limited impact to cases," District Attorney John Creuzot said in a statement. However, "at this time, it is too soon to estimate how many cases will be affected and what the impact will be on those individual cases," he said.

The lost data included images, video, audio, case notes and other information gathered by [police officers](#) and detectives, according to a Dallas Police Department statement. A city IT employee was migrating the files, which had not been accessed for the previous six to 18 months, from an online, cloud-based archive to a server at the city's data center.

"While performing the data migration, the employee failed to follow proper, established procedures, resulting in the deletion of the data files," according to the police statement.

Prosecutors have been instructed to verify that all investigating

detectives had shared evidence and files on cases with the District Attorney's Office before disposing of the case, Creuzot said. Prosecutors would then disclose in writing any files that were missing, as communicated by the police department.

The police statement said the city has assured new measures have been implemented to prevent a repeat of the data loss. Creuzot said he and Police Chief Eddie Garcia "have been in constant communication on this over the past few days and are committed to ensuring justice is served on each case."

Dallas defense attorney Amanda Branan, the president of the Dallas Criminal Defense Lawyers Association, said she was thankful for the disclosure so defense attorneys could request trial postponements and other accommodations.

"It is concerning that it took four months for the Dallas Police Department to inform the district attorney of the loss of the data," she said.

In its statement, the police department said it wanted "to fully evaluate whether the data was recoverable or not to know the full extent of the problem, if any," before going public.

Branan also said she was concerned that evidence that might strengthen defendant defenses might have been lost, so the police department needed to identify which cases the data loss affects so investigators can retrace their steps and restore the lost evidence.

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