

# **PDF File Redaction Best Practices**

## **Redacting Information in an Original Electronic Document**

The simplest method is to omit the information from the original document. For example, a Social Security number can be included as XXX-XX-1234. Commercially-available software also can be used to redact, not just hide, the sensitive information. While the court does not endorse any product, Redax from Appligent is one commercial product widely used by federal agencies. Adobe Acrobat 8.0 Professional is another commercial product having a redaction tool that scrubs the metadata and other information from the document.

## **Redacting Information in a Photocopied or Scanned Document**

In cases where the document is a photocopy or scan, the simplest method is to print the document, black out the text to be redacted with a black marker and scan the paper back into PDF format.

## **Avoid Inadvertent Disclosure of Redacted Material by Using Proper Redaction Techniques**

Depending upon the redaction technique used, it is possible that the redacted information may appear to be hidden or blocked in the document but the underlying protected information (metadata still imbedded in the document) may be accessed by technologically sophisticated members of the public. For example, the highlighter function in Adobe creates a black box over the data, but it merely hides the data. While the “redacted” information is unreadable, the metadata is still imbedded in the document. Anyone can copy the black box, paste it into a word-processing document, and the information under the black box appears.

Additional information on proper redaction of PDF documents is available at:  
<http://www.adobe.com/devnet/acrobat/pdfs/Redaction.pdf>