

What follows *isn't* the perfect preservation letter for *your case*, so don't simply treat it as a form. Use it as a drafting aid that flags issues unique to EDD, but tailor *your* preservation demand to the unique issues, parties and systems in *your case*.

Demand for Preservation of Electronically Stored Information

I write as counsel for _____ (hereinafter "Plaintiffs") to advise you of a claim for damages and other relief against you growing out of the following matters (hereinafter this "cause"):

[DESCRIPTION OF CLAIM, INCLUDING RELEVANT ACTORS, EVENTS, DATES, LOCATIONS, PRODUCTS, ETC.]

Plaintiffs demand that you preserve documents, tangible things and electronically stored information potentially relevant to the issues in this cause. As used in this document, "you" and "your" refers to **[NAME OF DEFENDANT]**, and its predecessors, successors, parents, subsidiaries, divisions and affiliates, and their respective officers, directors, agents, attorneys, accountants, employees, partners and other persons occupying similar positions or performing similar functions.

You should anticipate that much of the information subject to disclosure or responsive to discovery in this cause is stored on your current and former computer systems and other media and devices (including personal digital assistants, voice-messaging systems, online repositories and cell phones).

Electronically stored information (hereinafter "ESI") should be afforded the broadest possible meaning and includes (*by way of example and not as an exclusive list*) potentially relevant information electronically, magnetically, optically or otherwise stored as:

- Digital communications (e.g., e-mail, voice mail, instant messaging);
- E-Mail Server Stores (e.g., Lotus Domino .NSF or Microsoft Exchange .EDB)
- Word processed documents (e.g., Word or WordPerfect files and drafts);
- Spreadsheets and tables (e.g., Excel or Lotus 123 worksheets);
- Accounting Application Data (e.g., QuickBooks, Money, Peachtree data);
- Image and Facsimile Files (e.g., .PDF, .TIFF, .JPG, .GIF images);
- Sound Recordings (e.g., .WAV and .MP3 files);
- Video and Animation (e.g., .AVI and .MOV files);
- Databases (e.g., Access, Oracle, SQL Server data, SAP);
- Contact and Relationship Management Data (e.g., Outlook, ACT!);
- Calendar and Diary Application Data (e.g., Outlook PST, blog entries);
- Online Access Data (e.g., Temporary Internet Files, History, Cookies);
- Presentations (e.g., PowerPoint, Corel Presentations)
- Network Access and Server Activity Logs;
- Project Management Application Data;
- Computer Aided Design/Drawing Files; and
- Backup and Archival Files (e.g., Veritas, Zip, .GHO)

ESI resides not only in areas of electronic, magnetic and optical storage media reasonably accessible to you, but also in areas you may deem *not* reasonably accessible. You are obliged to *preserve* potentially relevant evidence from *both* sources of ESI, even if you do not anticipate *producing* such ESI.

The demand that you preserve both accessible and inaccessible ESI is reasonable and necessary. Pursuant to the rules of civil procedure, you must identify all sources of ESI you decline to produce and demonstrate to the court why such sources are not reasonably accessible. For good cause shown, the court may order production of the ESI, even if it is not reasonably accessible. Accordingly, you must preserve ESI that you deem inaccessible so as not to preempt the court's authority.

Preservation Requires Immediate Intervention

You must act immediately to preserve potentially relevant ESI, including, without limitation, information with the *earlier* of a Created or Last Modified date on or after [DATE] through the date of this demand and concerning:

1. The events and causes of action described [above]/[in Plaintiffs' Complaint];
2. ESI you may use to support claims or defenses in this case;
3.
4.

Adequate preservation of ESI requires more than simply refraining from efforts to destroy or dispose of such evidence. You must intervene to prevent loss due to routine operations or malfeasance and employ proper techniques and protocols to preserve ESI. *Booting a drive, examining its contents or running any application may irretrievably alter the evidence it contains and constitute unlawful spoliation of evidence. Preservation requires action.*

Nothing in this demand for preservation of ESI should be understood to diminish your concurrent obligation to preserve documents, tangible things and other potentially relevant evidence.

Suspension of Routine Destruction

You are directed to immediately initiate a litigation hold for potentially relevant ESI, documents and tangible things and to act diligently and in good faith to secure and audit compliance with such litigation hold. You are further directed to immediately identify and modify or suspend features of your information systems and devices that, in routine operation, operate to cause the loss of potentially relevant ESI. Examples of such features and operations include:

- Purging the contents of e-mail repositories by age, capacity or other criteria;
- Using data or media wiping, disposal, erasure or encryption utilities or devices;
- Overwriting, erasing, destroying or discarding backup media;
- Re-assigning, re-imaging or disposing of systems, servers, devices or media;
- Running antivirus or other programs effecting wholesale metadata alteration;
- Releasing or purging online storage repositories;
- Using metadata stripper utilities;

- Disabling server, packet or local instant messaging logging; and,
- Executing drive or file defragmentation or compression programs.

Guard Against Deletion

You should anticipate that your officers, employees or others may seek to hide, destroy or alter ESI. You must act to prevent and guard against such actions. Especially where company machines were used for Internet access or personal communications, you should anticipate that users may seek to delete or destroy information they regard as personal, confidential or embarrassing, and in so doing, they may also delete or destroy potentially relevant ESI. This concern is not unique to you. It's simply conduct that occurs with such regularity that any custodian of ESI and their counsel must anticipate and guard against its occurrence.

Preservation of Backup Tapes

You are directed to preserve complete backup tape sets (including differentials and incrementals) containing e-mail and ESI of the following custodians for all dates during the below-listed intervals:

[CUSTODIAN] [INTERVAL, e.g., 1/1/06 through 9/1/06]

Act to Prevent Spoliation

You should take affirmative steps to prevent anyone with access to your data, systems and archives from seeking to modify, destroy or hide ESI on network or local hard drives and on other media or devices (such as by deleting or overwriting files, using data shredding and overwriting applications, defragmentation, re-imaging, damaging or replacing media, encryption, compression, steganography or the like).

System Sequestration or Forensically Sound Imaging

As an appropriate and cost-effective means of preservation, you should remove from service and securely sequester the systems, media and devices housing potentially relevant ESI of the following persons:

[NAME KEY PLAYERS MOST DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN CAUSE]

In the event you deem it impractical to sequester systems, media and devices, we believe that the breadth of preservation required, coupled with the modest number of systems implicated, dictates that forensically sound imaging of the systems, media and devices of those named above is expedient and cost effective. As we anticipate the need for forensic examination of one or more of the systems and the presence of relevant evidence in forensically accessible areas of the drives, we demand that you employ forensically sound ESI preservation methods. Failure to use such methods poses a significant threat of spoliation and data loss.

“Forensically sound ESI preservation” means duplication of all data stored on the evidence media while employing a proper chain of custody and using tools and methods that make no changes to the evidence and support authentication of the duplicate as a true and complete bit-for-bit image of the original. The products of forensically sound duplication are called, *inter alia*, “bitstream images” or “clones” of the evidence media. A forensically sound preservation method

guards against changes to metadata evidence and preserves all parts of the electronic evidence, including deleted evidence within “unallocated clusters” and “slack space.”

Be advised that a conventional copy, backup or “Ghosting” of a hard drive does not produce a forensically sound image because it only captures active, unlocked data files and fails to preserve forensically significant data existing in, e.g., unallocated clusters and slack space.

Further Preservation by Imaging

With respect to the hard drives and storage devices of each of the persons named below and of each person acting in the capacity or holding the job title named below, demand is made that you immediately obtain, authenticate and preserve forensically sound images of the hard drives in any computer system (including portable and home computers) used by that person during the period from _____ to _____, as well as recording and preserving the system time and date of each such computer.

[NAMES, JOB DESCRIPTIONS OR JOB TITLES]

Once obtained, each such forensically sound image should be labeled to identify the date of acquisition, the person or entity acquiring the image and the system and medium from which it was obtained. Each such image should be preserved without alteration.

Preservation in Native Form

You should anticipate that certain ESI, including but not limited to spreadsheets and databases, will be sought in the form or forms in which it is ordinarily maintained (i.e., native form). Accordingly, you should preserve ESI in such native forms, and you should not employ methods to preserve ESI that remove or degrade the ability to search the ESI by electronic means or that make it difficult or burdensome to access or use the information.

You should additionally refrain from actions that shift ESI from reasonably accessible media and forms to less accessible media and forms if the effect of such actions is to make such ESI not reasonably accessible.

Metadata

You should further anticipate the need to disclose and produce system and application metadata and act to preserve it. System metadata is information describing the history and characteristics of other ESI. This information is typically associated with tracking or managing an electronic file and often includes data reflecting a file’s name, size, custodian, location and dates of creation and last modification or access. Application metadata is information automatically included or embedded in electronic files, but which may not be apparent to a user, including deleted content, draft language, commentary, collaboration and distribution data and dates of creation and printing. For electronic mail, metadata includes all header routing data and Base 64 encoded attachment data, in addition to the To, From, Subject, Received Date, CC and BCC fields.

Metadata may be overwritten or corrupted by careless handling or improper preservation, including by moving, copying or examining the contents of files.

Servers

With respect to servers used to manage e-mail (e.g., Microsoft Exchange, Lotus Domino) and network storage (often called a “network share”), the complete contents of each user’s network share and e-mail account should be preserved. There are several ways to preserve the contents of a server. If you are uncertain whether the preservation method you plan to employ is one that we will accept as sufficient, please immediately contact the undersigned.

Home Systems, Laptops, Online Accounts and Other ESI Venues

Though we expect that you will act swiftly to preserve data on office workstations and servers, you should also determine if any home or portable systems or devices may contain potentially relevant data. To the extent that you have sent or received potentially relevant e-mails or created or reviewed potentially relevant documents away from the office, you must preserve the contents of systems, devices and media used for these purposes (including not only potentially relevant data from portable and home computers, but also from portable thumb drives, CD-R/DVD-R disks and the user’s PDA, smart phone, voice mailbox or other forms of ESI storage.). Similarly, if you used online or browser-based e-mail accounts or services (such as Gmail, AOL, Yahoo Mail or the like) to send or receive potentially relevant messages and attachments, the contents of these account mailboxes (including Sent, Deleted and Archived Message folders) should be preserved.

Ancillary Preservation

You must preserve documents and other tangible items that may be required to access, interpret or search potentially relevant ESI, including logs, control sheets, specifications, indices, naming protocols, file lists, network diagrams, flow charts, instruction sheets, data entry forms, abbreviation keys, user ID and password rosters and the like.

You must preserve passwords, keys and other authenticators required to access encrypted files or run applications, along with the installation disks, user manuals and license keys for applications required to access the ESI.

You must preserve cabling, drivers and hardware, other than a standard 3.5” floppy disk drive or standard CD or DVD optical disk drive, if needed to access or interpret media on which ESI is stored. This includes tape drives, bar code readers, Zip drives and other legacy or proprietary devices.

Paper Preservation of ESI is Inadequate

As hard copies do not preserve electronic searchability or metadata, they are not an adequate substitute for, or cumulative of, electronically stored versions. If information exists in both electronic and paper forms, you should preserve both forms.

Agents, Attorneys and Third Parties

Your preservation obligation extends beyond ESI in your care, possession or custody and includes ESI in the custody of others that is subject to your direction or control. Accordingly, you

must notify any current or former agent, attorney, employee, custodian and contractor in possession of potentially relevant ESI to preserve such ESI to the full extent of your obligation to do so, and you must take reasonable steps to secure their compliance.

Preservation Protocols

We are desirous of working with you to agree upon an acceptable protocol for forensically sound preservation and can supply a suitable protocol if you will furnish an inventory and description of the systems and media to be preserved. Alternatively, if you promptly disclose the preservation protocol you intend to employ, perhaps we can identify any points of disagreement and resolve them. A successful and compliant ESI preservation effort requires expertise. If you do not currently have such expertise at your disposal, we urge you to engage the services of an expert in electronic evidence and computer forensics. Perhaps our respective experts can work cooperatively to secure a balance between evidence preservation and burden that's fair to both sides and acceptable to the court.

Do Not Delay Preservation

I'm available to discuss reasonable preservation steps; however, *you should not defer preservation steps pending such discussions if ESI may be lost or corrupted as a consequence of delay.* Should your failure to preserve potentially relevant evidence result in the corruption, loss or delay in production of evidence to which we are entitled, such failure would constitute spoliation of evidence, and we will not hesitate to seek sanctions.

Confirmation of Compliance

Please confirm by **[DATE]**, that you have taken the steps outlined in this letter to preserve ESI and tangible documents potentially relevant to this action. If you have not undertaken the steps outlined above, or have taken other actions, please describe what you have done to preserve potentially relevant evidence.