

**West Virginia Executive Branch
Privacy Tip of the Week
Redacting PII**

Question:

Help! I need to remove PII (Social Security Numbers, dates of birth and financial account numbers) from documents before sending them to a third party. Can you tell me how to do this?

Answer:

Have you ever needed to remove personally identifiable information (PII) from a document before you provide it to a third party? If so, it's very important that the PII be removed properly. When removing – or redacting – PII, take the following steps:

- ✓ Make a photocopy of the document – you don't want to redact the original.
- ✓ On the photocopy, use a black marker to conceal the PII that you want to redact. Be sure that the PII is totally covered with the black ink. A permanent marker is best.
- ✓ Make sure the ink is dry, and then photocopy the redacted document.
- ✓ Visually inspect this second photocopy – you should be unable to make out any of the PII through either the front or the back of the document. This second photocopy can be provided to the recipient.
- ✓ Save the first photocopy (with the black ink redaction) with the original, to show the redaction effort.

This process may seem a bit onerous, but it ensures that the PII cannot be recovered. If you don't make the second photocopy, it is occasionally possible for PII to be read from the back of the document.

Using a marker also prevents issues that are associated with white-out and other concealers. These products can often be "scratched off" to reveal the covered text. Additionally, these products can damage photocopiers if they are not allowed to dry properly before a copy is made.

If you often have to redact PII, keep a nice supply of thick black markers on hand for that job!

If you would like to review the redaction procedure issued by the WV State Privacy Office, please click on the following link:

<http://www.privacy.wv.gov/privacypolicies/Documents/Redaction%201.20.11.pdf>