Digital Warrants
in San Bernardino County
(because the fax machines just had to go)
A BOLD STATEMENT can go here. They can be longish.
County Size and Geography

• 12% of California’s geographic area
• 24 incorporated cities and towns
• 2.153 million residents – the 14th most populous county
• The largest county in the United States, roughly the size of West Virginia
San Bernardino County

20,000+ Square Miles

134 Miles

210 Miles
The Workload

- 350 after-hours warrants per month
- More than 20,000 warrants since 2012
- Submitted by 31 agencies
- Reviewed by 73 judges
The History of After-hours Search Warrants
In-person Requests

- The officer needed to go to the magistrate to have the warrant reviewed
Telephonic Requests

1. Officer must read the warrant to the judge
2. That conversation is recorded
3. A transcript is prepared
4. The magistrate certifies the transcript of the recording is correct
Fax Transmission (1993)

1. Officer calls judge to warn of impending warrant request
2. Fax received and read by judge
3. Officer must be contacted to swear the affidavit is true
4. Judge must verify that all pages sent have been received
5. Warrant is signed, and faxed back
6. Judge must verify the fax has been received
E-mail Transmission (1998)

- Allows digital signatures, and transmission by e-mail, but otherwise left the process unchanged
Moving into the Digital Realm

• Goal: to build a system that allowed warrants to be submitted and reviewed using the same technology widely adopted in the private sector
E-Fax with Notification

1. Minimize need for law enforcement to alter their processes
2. Ensure integrity and security of the process
3. Comply with legal requirements
4. Capture efficiencies, including remote access
E-Fax with Notification
E-Fax with Notification

Ensure integrity of the warrant system

- View every page of warrant before approving
- Document stored as flattened pdf
- Audit abilities
- Each warrant assigned a unique number
- Security
E-Fax with Notification

REMOTE ACCESS!
Limitations Left Unsolved

- Equipment failures
- Bad return fax numbers
- Inability to contact officers
- Incomplete documents
- Local hosting vulnerabilities
The Next Generation: E-Warrants

- Officers have mobile data terminals in their cars
- Fax machines falling into disuse
- Warrants are generated as Word documents, and sent from approved e-mail domains
[Demonstration]
E-Warrants: The Next Phase

• New legislation (effective 2019) eliminates the need to telephone the officer when a warrant is submitted electronically.
What opportunities are made available by eliminating the need to telephone the officer?

• Reduced waiting time for officers
• Increased location flexibility
Other Benefits!
Reduce the 5:00 pm bubble of warrant submissions
And Yet, More Benefits!

- Ability to tie returns to warrants
- Save law enforcement trips to court, reducing time and mileage
- Electronic storage of all warrants
- Standardization of warrant templates
- Moving system to the cloud
Thank You!

• Special thanks to the San Bernardino County Sheriff Department; a key partner through the development and evolution of the On-Call Warrant System

• Special thanks also to the developer, San Bernardino Information Systems Division