



Supreme Court: Police must have warrant to search cell phones

By: Emily Guggenmos
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The nation's highest court says personal cell phones are off-limits for police unless they have a search warrant.

People keep just about everything on their cell phones nowadays, like medical and bank account records, passwords, pictures and videos.

"I think the Supreme Court's ruling is tremendous and it protects the rights of citizens who are not doing anything wrong and those who are really living by their cell phones right now," said Buffalo Common Council Member Darius Pridgen.

The Supreme Court handed down the ruling, finding police can no longer search your cell phone without a warrant.

"It's been standard police procedure when they arrest someone and pat them down. They take everything that's on them, including their phone, and they search that for evidence of crime," said Ilya Shapiro a Senior Fellow at Cato Institute.

"Their ruling is just that and if it's the law of the land we'll follow the procedures necessary to do our job," said Buffalo Police Commissioner Daniel Derenda.

The Buffalo Police Department has a device called a UFED that they can attach to a cell phone and pull all the information out of it. They recently requested an additional one. Derenda said he doesn't know how the new law will affect the use of their UFED.

"Maybe a little bit more paperwork, but in the end we'll still get what we need," said Derenda.

"Some cops just take your phone and go through it, delete things they don't have no business doing, things like that," said Dyante Price a Buffalo Resident.

Recently, there have been a couple of instances where Buffalo Police are accused of telling citizens to delete videos off their cell phones. Pridgen says this law could prevent that.

“As times are changing we’re becoming much more technological that we need the Supreme Court to weigh in on these issues, to ensure that those who are doing law enforcement that they know what their parameters are also,” said Pridgen.

Many residents we talked with are happy with the ruling.

“We have private information on there. I keep my bank records, passwords, so I don’t feel comfortable with anyone searching my phone without a search warrant,” said Dina Connors from Hamburg.

The ruling was based on two cases, one in California and one in Boston, where two people were convicted of crimes after incriminating evidence was found through a search of their cell phones.