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5 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
6 WESTERN DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON  
7 AT TACOMA

8 TERRELL JONES,

9 Plaintiff,

10 v.

11 ARLEE ROTHWELL,

12 Defendant.

CASE NO. C15-5101 RBL-KLS

ORDER DENYING MOTION FOR  
SPOILIATION OF EVIDENCE

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14 Plaintiff Terrell Jones asks this Court for an order “to replace spoiled evidence that was  
15 taken from me and shredded by Defendant.” Dkt. 7. In this case, Mr. Jones seeks compensatory  
16 damages against Arlee Rothwell for the alleged loss of his personal legal documents without due  
17 process of law. He also claims that Mr. Rothwell’s conduct violated his right to access the  
18 courts. Dkt. 6. On April 27, 2015, the Court directed service of the complaint. Dkt. 8. Mr.  
19 Rothwell has not yet been served nor has his time to respond to the complaint expired. Thus,  
20 Mr. Jones’ motion is premature.

21 In addition, this Court cannot grant the relief sought by Mr. Jones in his motion. Mr.  
22 Jones contends that Mr. Rothwell shredded his 42 U.S.C. § 1983 complaint (with accompanying  
23 kites and grievances) against officers at the Washington State Penitentiary (WSP) for the use of

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SPOILIATION OF EVIDENCE - 1

1 excessive force. The complaint was confiscated as contraband because it was found in another  
2 inmate's cell. According to Mr. Jones, Mr. Rothwell destroyed the complaint because the  
3 documents were unidentifiable. However, Mr. Jones contends that Mr. Rothwell was lying. Dkt.  
4 7.

5 It is unclear how Mr. Jones expects shredded documents to be returned to him. In  
6 addition, a complaint is not evidence<sup>1</sup>. Spoliation is the "destruction or significant alteration of  
7 evidence, or the failure to preserve property for another's use as evidence, in pending or future  
8 litigation." *Kearney v. Foley & Lardner, LLP*, 590 F.3d 638, 649 (9th Cir.2009) (citation  
9 omitted). While a district court may levy sanctions for the spoliation of evidence, sanctions are  
10 appropriate only if the party had notice that the evidence is potentially relevant to a claim. See  
11 *U.S. v. \$40,955.00 in U.S. Currency*, 554 F.3d 752, 758 (9th Cir.2009); *Leon v. IDX Sys. Corp.*,  
12 464 F.3d 951, 958 (9th Cir.2006). The duty to preserve evidence is triggered when a party  
13 knows or reasonably should know that the evidence may be relevant to pending or future  
14 litigation.

15 Accordingly, Plaintiff's motion for spoliation is **DENIED**. The Clerk shall send a copy  
16 of this Order to Plaintiff.

17 Dated this 18<sup>th</sup> day of May, 2015.

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19 Karen L. Strombom  
20 United States Magistrate Judge

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22 <sup>1</sup> The Court notes that Mr. Jones filed a complaint for the excessive use of force against WSP  
23 employees on July 11, 2014. The case was transferred to the Eastern District of Washington on  
August 7, 2014. See *Jones v. Washington State Penitentiary*, Case No. C14-5557 RBL-JRC.