

IACP National Law Enforcement Policy Center BODY-WORN CAMERAS

**Model Policy
April 2014**

I. PURPOSE

This policy is intended to provide officers with instructions on when and how to use body-worn cameras (BWCs) so that officers may reliably record their contacts with the public in accordance with the law.¹

II. POLICY

It is the policy of this department that officers shall activate the BWC when such use is appropriate to the proper performance of his or her official duties, where the recordings are consistent with this policy and law. This policy does not govern the use of surreptitious recording devices used in undercover operations.

III. PROCEDURES

A. Administration

This agency has adopted the use of the BWC to accomplish several objectives. The primary objectives are as follows:

1. BWCs allow for accurate documentation of police-public contacts, arrests, and critical incidents. They also serve to enhance the accuracy of officer reports and testimony in court.
2. Audio and video recordings also enhance this agency's ability to review probable cause for arrest, officer and suspect interaction, and evidence for investigative and prosecutorial purposes and to provide additional information for officer evaluation and training.
3. The BWC may also be useful in documenting crime and accident scenes or other events that include the confiscation and documentation of evidence or contraband.

B. When and How to Use the BWC

1. Officers shall activate the BWC to record all contacts with citizens in the performance of official duties.
2. Whenever possible, officers should inform individuals that they are being recorded. In locations where individuals have a reasonable expectation of privacy, such as a residence, they may decline to be recorded unless the recording is being made in pursuant to an arrest or search of the residence or the individuals. The BWC shall remain activated until the event is completed in order to ensure the integrity of the recording unless the contact moves into an area restricted by this policy (see items D.1-4).
3. If an officer fails to activate the BWC, fails to record the entire contact, or interrupts the recording, the officer shall document why a recording was not made, was interrupted, or was terminated.
4. Civilians shall not be allowed to review the recordings at the scene.

- C. Procedures for BWC Use
1. BWC equipment is issued primarily to uniformed personnel as authorized by this agency. Officers who are assigned BWC equipment must use the equipment unless otherwise authorized by supervisory personnel.
 2. Police personnel shall use only BWCs issued by this department. The BWC equipment and all data, images, video, and metadata captured, recorded, or otherwise produced by the equipment is the sole property of the agency.
 3. Police personnel who are assigned BWCs must complete an agency approved and/or provided training program to ensure proper use and operations. Additional training may be required at periodic intervals to ensure the continued effective use and operation of the equipment, proper calibration and performance, and to incorporate changes, updates, or other revisions in policy and equipment.
 4. BWC equipment is the responsibility of individual officers and will be used with reasonable care to ensure proper functioning. Equipment malfunctions shall be brought to the attention of the officer's supervisor as soon as possible so that a replacement unit may be procured.
 5. Officers shall inspect and test the BWC prior to each shift in order to verify proper functioning and shall notify their supervisor of any problems.
 6. Officers shall not edit, alter, erase, duplicate, copy, share, or otherwise distribute in any manner BWC recordings without prior written authorization and approval of the chief executive officer (CEO) or his or her designee.
 7. Officers are encouraged to inform their supervisor of any recordings that may be of value for training purposes.
 8. If an officer is suspected of wrongdoing or involved in an officer-involved shooting or other serious use of force, the department reserves the right to limit or restrict an officer from viewing the video file.
 9. Requests for deletion of portions of the recordings (e.g., in the event of a personal recording) must be submitted in writing and approved by the chief executive officer or his or her designee in accordance with state record retention laws. All requests and final decisions shall be kept on file.
 10. Officers shall note in incident, arrest, and related reports when recordings were made during the incident in question. However, BWC recordings are not a replacement for written reports.
- D. Restrictions on Using the BWC
- BWCs shall be used only in conjunction with official law enforcement duties. The BWC shall not generally be used to record:
1. Communications with other police personnel without the permission of the chief executive officer (CEO);
 2. Encounters with undercover officers or confidential informants;
 3. When on break or otherwise engaged in personal activities; or

4. In any location where individuals have a reasonable expectation of privacy, such as a restroom or locker room.
- E. Storage
1. All files² shall be securely downloaded periodically and no later than the end of each shift. Each file shall contain information related to the date, BWC identifier, and assigned officer.
 2. All images and sounds recorded by the BWC are the exclusive property of this department. Accessing, copying, or releasing files for non-law enforcement purposes is strictly prohibited.
 3. All access to BWC data (images, sounds, and metadata) must be specifically authorized by the CEO or his or her designee, and all access is to be audited to ensure that only authorized users are accessing the data for legitimate and authorized purposes.
 4. Files should be securely stored in accordance with state records retention laws and no longer than useful for purposes of training or for use in an investigation or prosecution. In capital punishment prosecutions, recordings shall be kept until the offender is no longer under control of a criminal justice agency.
- F. Supervisory Responsibilities
1. Supervisory personnel shall ensure that officers equipped with BWC devices utilize them in accordance with policy and procedures defined herein.
 2. At least on a monthly basis, supervisors will randomly review BWC recordings to ensure that the equipment is operating properly and that officers are using the devices appropriately and in accordance with policy and to identify any areas in which additional training or guidance is required.

Endnotes

¹ Some states have eavesdropping statutes that require two-party consent prior to audio recording. Consult your legal advisor for state and local laws that affect your agency.

² For the purpose of this document, the term “file” refers to all sounds, images, and associated metadata.

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Every effort has been made by the IACP National Law Enforcement Policy Center staff and advisory board to ensure that this model policy incorporates the most current information and contemporary professional judgment on this issue. However, law enforcement administrators should be cautioned that no “model” policy can meet all the needs of any given law enforcement agency. Each law enforcement agency operates in a unique environment of federal court rulings, state laws, local ordinances, regulations, judicial and administrative decisions and collective bargaining agreements that must be considered. In addition, the formulation of specific agency policies must take into account local political and community perspectives and customs, prerogatives and demands; often divergent law enforcement strategies and philosophies; and the impact of varied agency resource capabilities among other factors.

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