



City of St. Louis Park, Minnesota Use of Body-Worn Cameras Policy

Purpose

The primary purpose of using body-worn-cameras (BWCs) is to:

- A. Capture evidence arising from a police-citizen contact.
- B. Assist with accurate report writing.
- C. Allow for transparency and accountability in policing and protect the civil rights of the community.

This policy sets forth guidelines governing the use of BWCs and administering the data that results. Compliance with these guidelines is mandatory, but it is recognized that officers must also attend to other primary duties and the safety of all concerned, sometimes in circumstances that are tense, uncertain, and rapidly evolving.

Objectives

The St. Louis Park Police Department has adopted the use of portable audio/video recorders to accomplish the following objectives:

- A. To enhance officer safety.
- B. To document statements and events during the course of an incident.
- C. To enhance the officer's ability to document and review statements and actions for both internal reporting requirements and for courtroom preparation/presentation.
- D. To preserve audio and visual information for use in current and future investigations.
- E. To enhance the public trust by preserving factual representations of officer-citizen interactions in the form of audio-video recording.
- F. To promote the civility of police-civilian encounters
- G. To provide objective evidence to help resolve civilian complaints against police officers and the City of St. Louis Park.
- H. To protect the civil rights of the community.
- I. To assist with training and evaluation of officers.

Policy

It is the policy of this department to authorize and require the use of department-issued BWCs as set forth below, and to administer BWC data as provided by law.

Scope

This policy governs the use of BWCs in the course of official duties. It does not apply to the use of squad-based (dash-cam) recording systems. The Chief of Police or the chief's designee may supersede this policy by providing specific instructions for BWC use to individual officers, or providing specific instructions pertaining to particular events or classes of events, including but not limited to political rallies and demonstrations where their use might be perceived as a form of political or viewpoint-based surveillance. The chief or designee may also provide specific instructions or standard operating procedures for BWC use to officers assigned to specialized details, such as carrying out duties in courts or guarding prisoners or patients in hospitals and mental health facilities. In the event the chief does supersede policy by providing specific instructions for use, a written report will be submitted to the City Manager.

Definitions

The following phrases have special meanings as used in this policy:

- A. **MGDPA or Data Practices Act** refers to the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, Minn. Stat. § 13.01, et seq.
- B. **Records Retention Schedule** refers to the General Records Retention Schedule for Minnesota Cities.
- C. **Law enforcement-related information** means information captured or available for capture by use of a BWC that has evidentiary value because it documents events with respect to a stop, arrest, search, citation, or charging decision.
- D. **Evidentiary Value** means that the information may be useful as proof in a prosecution or defense of a criminal action, related civil or administrative proceeding, further investigation of an actual or suspected criminal act, or in considering an allegation against a law enforcement agency or officer.
- E. **General Citizen Contact** means an informal encounter with a citizen that is not and does not become law enforcement-related or adversarial, and a recording of the event would not yield information relevant to an ongoing investigation. Examples include, but are not limited to, assisting a motorist with directions, summoning a tow truck, or receiving generalized concerns from a citizen about crime trends in his or her neighborhood.
- F. **Adversarial** means a law enforcement encounter with a person that becomes confrontational, during which at least one person expresses anger, resentment, or hostility toward the other, or at least one person directs toward the other verbal conduct consisting of arguing, threatening, challenging, swearing, yelling, or shouting. Encounters in which a citizen demands to be recorded or initiates recording on his or her own are deemed adversarial.

- G. **Unintentionally recorded footage** is a video recording that results from an officer's inadvertence or neglect in operating the officer's BWC, provided that no portion of the resulting recording has evidentiary value. Examples of unintentionally recorded footage include, but are not limited to, recordings made in station house locker rooms, restrooms, and recordings made while officers were engaged in conversations of a non-business, personal nature with the expectation that the conversation was not being recorded.

- H. **Official duties**, for purposes of this policy, means that the officer is on duty and performing authorized law enforcement services on behalf of this agency.

Training

All users of a BWC will be trained on the cameras operation and this policy prior to deploying one.

Use and Documentation

- A. Officers may use only department-issued BWCs in the performance of official duties for this agency or when otherwise performing authorized law enforcement services as an employee of this department.

- B. All officers working uniform patrol, uniform special details, traffic duties, and uniform school resource officer duties shall use a BWC unless permission has been granted by a supervisor to deviate from this clause. Plain clothes investigators/officers and administrators are allowed to use BWC when interacting with citizens, when appropriate.

- C. Officers who have deployed a BWC shall operate and use them consistent with this policy. Officers shall conduct a function test of their issued BWCs at the beginning of each shift to make sure the devices are operating properly. Officers noting a malfunction during testing or at any other time shall promptly report the malfunction to the officer's supervisor. As soon as is practical, the malfunctioning BWC shall be put down for service and the officer should deploy a working BWC. If a BWC malfunctions while recording, is lost, or damaged the circumstances shall be documented in a police report and a supervisor shall be notified. Supervisors shall take prompt action to address malfunctions and document the steps taken in writing.

- D. Officers should wear their BWC in a conspicuous manner at the location on their body and manner specified in training.

- E. Officers must document BWC use and non-use as follows:

1. Whenever an officer makes a recording, the existence of the recording shall be documented in the records management system, an incident report, or a citation if completed.
 2. Whenever an officer fails to record an activity that is required to be recorded under this policy or captures only a part of the activity, the officer must document the circumstances and reasons for not recording in the records management system or incident report. Supervisors shall review these reports and initiate any corrective action deemed necessary.
- F. The department will maintain the following records and documents relating to BWC use, which are classified as public data:
1. The total number of BWCs owned or maintained by the agency;
 2. A daily record of the total number of BWCs actually deployed and used by officers and, if applicable, the precincts in which they were used;
 3. The total amount of recorded BWC data collected and maintained; and
 4. This policy, together with the Records Retention Schedule.

General Guidelines for Recording

- A. This policy is not intended to describe every possible situation in which the BWC should be activated, although there are many situations where use of the BWC is appropriate. Officers should activate the BWC any time the user believes it would be appropriate or valuable to record an incident.
- B. Officers shall activate their BWCs when anticipating that they will be involved in, become involved in, or witness other officers of this agency involved in a pursuit, *Terry* frisks, a traffic stop of a motorist, an investigative stop of a pedestrian, searches, seizures, arrests, response to resistance incidents, any encounter that becomes in any way hostile, confrontational, or adversarial, and during other activities likely to yield information having evidentiary value. However, officers need not activate their cameras when it would be unsafe, impossible, or impractical to do so, but such instances of not recording when otherwise required must be documented as specified in the Use and Documentation guidelines, part (E)(2) (above).
- C. Officers have discretion to record or not record general citizen contacts.
- D. Officers will wear their camera in a conspicuous manner as specified in training. Officers have no affirmative duty to inform people that a BWC is being operated or that the

individuals are being recorded. Officers may make an announcement that BWCs are being used.

- E. Once activated, the BWC should continue recording until the conclusion of the incident or encounter, or until it becomes apparent that additional recording is unlikely to capture information having evidentiary value. The supervisor having charge of a scene shall likewise direct the discontinuance of recording when further recording is unlikely to capture additional information having evidentiary value. If the recording is discontinued while an investigation, response, or incident is ongoing, officers shall state the reasons for ceasing the recording on camera before deactivating their BWC. If circumstances change, officers shall reactivate their cameras as required by this policy to capture information having evidentiary value. Any decision to discontinue recording shall be made with respect to the nine policy objectives.
- F. Officers shall not intentionally block the BWC's audio or visual recording functionality to defeat the purposes of this policy. This does not prevent an officer from temporarily blocking the visual recording while ensuring audio data is collected during an encounter with persons who are nude or when sensitive human areas are exposed.
- G. Notwithstanding any other provision in this policy, officers shall not use their BWCs or any other device to record other agency personnel during non-enforcement related activities, such as during pre- and post-shift time in locker rooms, during meal breaks, or during other private conversations, unless recording is authorized as part of a criminal investigation.

Special Guidelines for Recording

Officers may, in the exercise of sound discretion, determine:

- A. To use their BWCs to record any police-citizen encounter if there is reason to believe the recording would potentially yield information having evidentiary value, unless such recording is otherwise expressly prohibited.
- B. To use their BWCs to take recorded statements from persons believed to be victims of and witnesses to crimes, and persons suspected of committing crimes, considering the needs of the investigation and the circumstances pertaining to the victim, witness, or suspect. The preferred method of recording a formal statement from a victim, witness or suspect is using currently approved audio recording devices/software compatible with records management dictation software.

In addition,

- C. Officers need not record persons being provided medical care unless there is reason to believe the recording would document information having evidentiary value. When responding to an apparent mental health crisis or event, BWCs shall be activated as necessary to document any response to resistance and the basis for it, and any other information having evidentiary value, but need not be activated when doing so would serve only to record symptoms or behaviors believed to be attributable to the mental health issue.
- D. Officers should use their BWC and/or squad-based audio/video systems to record their transportation and the physical transfer of persons in their custody to hospitals, detox and mental health care facilities, juvenile detention centers, and jails, but otherwise should not record in these facilities unless the officer anticipates witnessing a criminal event or being involved in or witnessing an adversarial encounter or response to resistance incident.

School Resource Officers

The St. Louis Park Police Department recognizes that the duties and working environment for School Resource Officers (SRO) are unique within policing. It recognizes the SROs are required to maintain school safety while keeping the sanctity of the learning environment that the school provides. SROs are expected to continuously build trusting relationships with students and staff. SROs often have impromptu interventions with students to deescalate arguments and/or conflicts. It is with this understanding that the St. Louis Park Police Department provide special guidelines for SROs and their BWC.

The BWC should be activated in any of the following situations:

- (a) When summoned by any individual to respond to an incident where it is likely that law enforcement action will occur when you arrive.
- (b) Any self-initiated activity where it is previously known that you will make a custodial arrest.
- (c) Any self-initiated activity where it is previously known that you're questioning / investigation will be used later in a criminal charge.
- (d) When feasible an SRO shall activate the BWC when the contact becomes adversarial or the subject exhibits unusual behaviors.

Nothing in the policy undermines the fact that in many instances SROs are suddenly forced to take law enforcement action and have no opportunity to activate the BWC. It is also recognized that SROs have private (confidential) conversations with juveniles. It is not always appropriate to record these conversations as it diminishes the trust between the individual and the SRO.

Downloading and Categorizing Data

- A. Each officer using a BWC is responsible for transferring or assuring the proper transfer of the data from their camera to the BWC server by the end of that officer's shift. However, if the officer is involved in a shooting, in-custody death, or other law enforcement activity resulting in death or great bodily harm, a supervisor or investigator shall take custody of the officer's BWC and consult with their supervisor.
- B. Officers shall categorize the BWC data files of each video capture and should consult with a supervisor if in doubt as to the appropriate category. The selected category(ies) shall determine the retention times per the general records retention schedule established by the Minnesota Clerks and Finance Officers Association (MCFOA).
- C. In addition, officers shall categorize each file appropriately, in the manner specified in training, with the appropriate category to indicate the information it contains. Some data subjects may have rights under the MGDPA limiting disclosure of information about them. These individuals include:
 - 1. Victims and alleged victims of criminal sexual conduct and sex trafficking.
 - 2. Victims of child abuse or neglect.
 - 3. Vulnerable adults who are victims of maltreatment.
 - 4. Undercover officers.
 - 5. Informants.
 - 6. When the video is clearly offensive to common sensitivities.
 - 7. Victims of and witnesses to crimes, if the victim or witness has requested not to be identified publicly.
 - 8. Individuals who called 911, and services subscribers whose lines were used to place a call to the 911 system.
 - 9. Mandated reporters.
 - 10. Juvenile witnesses, if the nature of the event or activity justifies protecting the identity of the witness.
 - 11. Juveniles who are or may be delinquent or engaged in criminal acts.

12. Individuals who make complaints about violations with respect to the use of real property.
 13. Officers and employees who are the subject of a complaint related to the events captured on video.
 14. Other individuals whose identities the officer believes may be legally protected from public disclosure.
- D. Category and flag designations may be corrected or amended based on additional information.

Administering Access to BWC Data

- A. **Data subjects.** Under Minnesota law, the following are considered data subjects for purposes of administering access to BWC data:
1. Any person or entity whose image or voice is documented in the data.
 2. The officer who collected the data.
 3. Any other officer whose voice or image is documented in the data, regardless of whether that officer is or can be identified by the recording.
- B. **BWC data is presumptively private.** BWC recordings are classified as private data about the data subjects unless there is a specific law that provides differently. As a result:
1. BWC data pertaining to people is presumed private, as is BWC data pertaining to businesses or other entities.
 2. Some BWC data is classified as confidential (see C. below).
 3. Some BWC data is classified as public (see D. below).
- C. **Confidential data.** BWC data that is collected or created as part of an active criminal investigation is confidential. This classification takes precedence over the “private” classification listed above and the “public” classifications listed below.
- D. **Public data.** The following BWC data is public:

1. Data documenting the discharge of a firearm by a peace officer in the course of duty, other than for training or the killing of an animal that is sick, injured, or dangerous.
2. Data that documents the use of force by a peace officer that results in substantial bodily harm.
3. Data that a data subject requests to be made accessible to the public, subject to redaction. Data on any data subject (other than a peace officer) who has not consented to the public release must be redacted [if practicable]. In addition, any data on undercover officers must be redacted.
4. Data that documents the final disposition of a disciplinary action against a public employee.

However, if another provision of the Data Practices Act classifies data as private or otherwise not public, the data retains that other classification. For instance, data that reveals protected identities under Minn. Stat. § 13.82, subd. 17 (e.g., certain victims, witnesses, and others) should not be released even if it would otherwise fit into one of the public categories listed above.

E. **Access to BWC data by non-employees.** Officers shall refer members of the media or public seeking access to BWC data to the administrative lieutenant or their designee, who shall process the request in accordance with the St. Louis Park Police Department's applicable processes and policies and other governing laws. In particular:

1. An individual shall be allowed to review recorded BWC data about themselves and other data subjects in the recording, but access shall not be granted:
 - a. If the data was collected or created as part of an active investigation.
 - b. To portions of the data that the agency would otherwise be prohibited by law from disclosing to the person seeking access, such as portions that would reveal identities protected by Minn. Stat. § 13.82, subd. 17.
2. Unless the data is part of an active investigation, an individual data subject shall be provided with a copy of the recording upon request, but subject to the following guidelines on redaction:
 - a. Data on other individuals in the recording who do not consent to the release must be redacted.
 - b. Data that would identify undercover officers must be redacted.

- c. Data on other officers who are not undercover, and who are on duty and engaged in the performance of official duties, may not be redacted.

F. **Access by peace officers and law enforcement employees.** No employee may have access to the department's BWC data except for legitimate law enforcement or data administration purposes:

1. Officers may access, share, view and download stored BWC video only when there is a business need for doing so, including the need to defend against an allegation of misconduct or substandard performance. Officers may review video footage of an incident in which they were involved prior to preparing a report, giving a statement, or providing testimony about the incident. Officers shall not use the fact that a recording was made as a reason to write a less detailed report.
2. Personal devices shall not be used to capture, record, transfer, store or view any BWC videos, photos or other evidence.
3. Supervisors may view recordings at any time they are making inquiry into an alleged complaint, performance issue, or policy violation.
4. Agency personnel are prohibited from accessing BWC data for non-business reasons and from sharing the data for non-law enforcement related purposes, including but not limited to uploading BWC data recorded or maintained by this agency to public and social media websites. All incidents of access to BWC data are digitally logged. Allegations of inappropriate access to BWC data will be investigated and based on the finding, discipline may result.
5. Employees seeking access to BWC data for non-business reasons may make a request for it in the same manner as any member of the public.

G. **Other authorized disclosures of data.** Officers may display portions of BWC footage to witnesses as necessary for purposes of investigation as allowed by Minn. Stat. § 13.82, subd. 15, as may be amended from time to time. These displays will generally be limited in order to protect against the incidental disclosure of individuals whose identities are not public. Any displays will take place at the St. Louis Park Police Department with the approval of a supervisor. Protecting against incidental disclosure could involve, for instance, showing only a portion of the video, showing only screen shots, muting the audio, or playing the audio but not displaying video. In addition,

1. An officer may request a supervisor respond to the scene and request approval for a display to take place outside the St. Louis Park Police Department.

2. BWC data may be shared with other law enforcement agencies only for legitimate law enforcement purposes that are documented in writing at the time of the disclosure.
3. BWC data shall be made available to prosecutors, courts, and other criminal justice entities as provided by law.

Data Security Safeguards

- A. Department members shall not intentionally edit, alter, or erase any BWC recording unless otherwise expressly authorized by the Chief of Police or the Chief's designee.
- B. As required by Minn. Stat. § 13.825, subd. 9, as may be amended from time to time, this agency shall obtain an independent biennial audit of its BWC program.

Agency Use of Data

- A. To ensure compliance with this policy and to identify any performance areas in which additional training or guidance is required supervisors will review each officer's BWC recordings during each officer's trimester evaluation or more frequently if there is reason to do so.
- B. In addition, supervisors and other assigned personnel may access BWC data for the purposes of reviewing or investigating a specific incident that has given rise to a complaint or concern about officer misconduct or performance.
- C. When a video is accessed or reviewed via Evidence.com, a notation shall be entered into the "Notes" section of the screen stating the reason for access.
- D. Nothing in this policy limits or prohibits the use of BWC data as evidence of misconduct or as a basis for discipline.
- E. Officers should contact their supervisors to discuss retaining and using BWC footage for training purposes. Officer objections to preserving or using certain footage for training will be considered by the chief of Police on a case-by-case basis. Field training officers may utilize BWC data with trainees for the purpose of providing coaching and feedback on the trainees' performance.

Data Retention

- A. All BWC data shall be retained for a minimum period of 90 days. There are no exceptions for erroneously recorded or non-evidentiary data.
- B. Data documenting the following incidents must be maintained for a minimum period of one year:
 - 1. Discharge of a firearm by a peace officer in the course of duty, other than for training or the killing of an animal that is sick, injured or dangerous.
 - 2. The use of deadly force by a peace officer, or force of a sufficient type or degree to require a response to resistance report or supervisory review.
 - 3. Circumstances that have given rise to a formal complaint against an officer.
- C. Other data having evidentiary value shall be retained for the period specified in the Records Retention Schedule. When a particular recording is subject to multiple retention periods, it shall be maintained for the longest applicable period.
- D. Subject to Part F (below), all other BWC footage that is classified as non-evidentiary, becomes classified as non-evidentiary, or is not maintained for training shall be destroyed after 90 days.
- E. Upon written request by a BWC data subject, the agency shall retain a recording pertaining to that subject for an additional time period requested by the subject of up to 1 year. The agency will notify the requestor at the time of the request that the data will then be destroyed unless a new written request is received.
- F. The department shall maintain an inventory of BWC recordings having evidentiary value.
- G. The department will post this policy, together with a link to its Records Retention Schedule, on its website.
- H. In the event that a BWC data file is inaccurately categorized by an officer, or additional information is gained that suggests a data file category should be changed, the officer shall notify their immediate supervisor of the required change(s).

Compliance

Supervisors shall monitor for compliance with this policy. Depending on the circumstances, violations of the policy may result in coaching and counseling, oral reprimand, written reprimand, suspension or termination. The unauthorized access to or disclosure of BWC data may constitute misconduct and subject individuals to disciplinary action and criminal penalties pursuant to Minn. Stat. § 13.09.

BCA Notification

Notification will be made to the MN Bureau of Criminal Apprehension within ten days of obtaining new surveillance technology that expands the type or scope of the agency's portable recording system.