

I'm Dave Douglas with a community comment.

I've been asked about body worn cameras for police personnel on numerous occasions. As an early advocate for a networked system of car cameras and elevated surveillance cameras in my city - I support body worn cameras.

It is my belief that, if implemented properly :

1) Complaints against officers will drop as the cameras document what actually occurred. Officers will still be held accountable for their conduct and criminal offenders can be more effectively prosecuted. Both must occur, as criminals should not be able to hide their actions while on camera as officer activities in their community are monitored.

2) Investigations will improve since officers must have the ability to quickly review the camera information for investigative and reporting purposes, whether or not they are involved. The goal should be the best and most complete documentation available: period. Real time recording is considered a best evidence when it is available.

3) Policing will become more expensive. Grants will help with initial technology purchases but the ongoing expenses to implement, maintain and properly utilize the technology will be expensive in terms of equipment and personnel. Absolutely worth it: but expensive.

While a supporter, I must caution that cameras do not substitute for investigation. They can only show a graphic piece of most situations.

I am going to read a series of bullet points from the United States Department of Justice : Cops Office and Police Executive

Research Forum publication titled: *Implementing a Body Worn Camera Program: Recommendations and Lessons Learned*. This publication provides guidance to law enforcement agencies on the use of body worn cameras.

Detail beyond the bullet points can be found on the KINS Radio Website under my community comment. I invite you to visit the website for a few minutes to learn more.

The following is a partial list of policy recommendations based on research conducted by PERF and the COPS Office.¹ Agencies should adapt these recommendations to fit their own needs, resources, legal requirements, and philosophical approach.

- **With limited exceptions, officers should be required to activate their body-worn cameras when responding to all calls for service and during all law enforcement-related encounters and activities that occur while the officer is on duty.** Policies should clearly define what is included in this requirement (e.g., traffic stops, arrests, searches, interrogations, pursuits). When in doubt, officers should record. Many agencies provide exceptions for situations in which recording is unsafe, impossible, or impractical but require officers to articulate in writing or on camera their reasons for not recording.
- **Officers should be required to obtain consent prior to recording interviews with crime victims.** This addresses the significant privacy concerns associated with videotaping crime victims.
- **Officers should have the discretion to keep their cameras turned off during conversations with crime witnesses and members of the community who wish to discuss criminal activity in their neighborhood.** Some witnesses and community members may be hesitant to come forward if they know they will be recorded. This can undermine community policing and intelligence-gathering efforts. Due to the evidentiary value of these statements, officer should make every attempt to record unless the person is unwilling to speak on camera. In some cases, victims or witnesses may agree to only an audio recording, so an officer may agree to point the camera away from the person and record audio only.
- **Officers should be required to articulate on camera or in writing their reasoning if they fail to record an activity that is required by department policy to be recorded.** This holds officers accountable and helps supervisors investigate irregularities. It is also increasingly common for courts and review boards to expect video recordings, so documenting the absence of a video can help alleviate concerns about the officer's credibility.
- **Policies should include specific measures to prevent data tampering, deleting, and copying.** It is critical to protect the integrity and security of video footage. Common strategies include: using data storage systems with built-in audit trails, requiring supervisors to download footage of an incident in which the officer was involved, and conducting forensic reviews.
- **Policies should specifically state the length of time that recorded data must be retained.** Officers should categorize footage according to the type of event recorded. Retention times for evidentiary footage are typically governed by state evidentiary laws and regulations. For non-evidentiary data, agencies should consider the need to preserve footage to promote transparency and investigate complaints, the state's public disclosure laws, data storage capacity, and departmental policies governing other types of electronic records. Most agencies PERF consulted retain non-evidentiary data for 60 to 90 days.
- **Officers should be permitted to review video footage of an incident in which they were involved prior to making a statement about the incident.** Reviewing footage aids officer recollection and leads to more accurate documentation of events. Real-time recording is considered best evidence and is unaffected by stress or other factors. Most police executives PERF consulted favor allowing review in these circumstances.

- **Written policies should clearly describe the circumstances in which supervisors will be authorized to review an officer's body-worn camera footage.** PERF recommends that supervisors review footage to investigate complaints and specific incidents, to identify training videos, and to review the activities of officers who are in a probationary period or who have a pattern of abuse allegations. The agency's internal audit unit, rather than an officer's direct supervisor, should conduct random reviews of footage to monitor compliance and assess performance. This policy will help avoid undermining the trust between an officer and supervisor.
- **Agencies should have clear and consistent protocols for releasing recorded data externally to the public and the news media.** Each agency's policy must comply with the state's public disclosure laws. PERF generally recommends a broad disclosure policy to promote agency transparency and accountability. However, agencies must always take into account privacy considerations when determining whether to release footage. Policies should include specific measures for preventing unauthorized video access or release.
- **Body-worn camera training should be required for all agency personnel who may use or otherwise be involved with body-worn cameras.** This includes supervisors whose officers wear cameras, records management personnel, training personnel, Internal Affairs, etc. Training should be ongoing and include an overview of relevant laws, procedures for operating the equipment safely and effectively, scenario-based exercises, data management procedures, and how to present video evidence in court.
- **Agencies should collect statistical data concerning body-worn camera usage.** Collecting and releasing this data helps promote transparency and allows agencies to evaluate program effectiveness. Agencies should conduct periodic reviews of body-worn camera policies and protocols.

The COPS Office Resource Center has [Implementing a Body-Worn Camera Program](#) available for order or download.