POLICE OFFICER STANDARD AND TRAINING COUNCIL

Statewide Policy Concerning

Use of Body Worn Recording Equipment and Dashboard Cameras

Revision Date: January 6, 2025
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State of Connecticut
Police Officer Standards and Training Council
Model Policy
Use of Body Worn Recording Equipment and Dashboard Cameras [1]

Body-Worn Recording Equipment and Dashboard Cameras

A. Purpose

1. The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines related to the use, management, storage and retrieval of digital multimedia video files stored on or generated from the use of body-worn recording equipment and dashboard cameras, including but not limited to:

    a. Creating video and audio records to contribute to the accurate documentation of critical incidents, police-public contacts, crime and accident scenes, and arrests.

    b. Preserving visual and audio information for use in current and future investigations in accordance with applicable guidelines referenced herein.

    c. Capturing crimes in-progress, whether committed against the police officer or the community, and to preserve evidence for presentation in court.

    d. Documenting police response to an incident.

    e. Aiding in the documentation of victim, witness or suspect statements pursuant to an on-scene response and/or documentation of the advisement of rights, and consents to conduct a lawful search, when applicable.

    f. Reducing the number of false complaints made against a police officer in the course and scope of his or her official police duties.

2. The purpose of equipping police officers with body-worn recording equipment and dashboard cameras is to assist in the following:

    a. Strengthening police accountability by documenting incidents and encounters between officers and the public.

[1] This policy has been updated to conform with the provisions of P.A. 24-15, § 1, effective October 1, 2024. P.A. 24-15, § 1 is codified at Conn. Gen. Stat. § 7-294s and amended this statute to require: "training in the use of body-worn recording equipment, including under which circumstances an officer shall not pause recording on such equipment" (new statutory language is underlined). This policy also conforms with P.A. 24-15, § 2, effective May 14, 2024, which amended Conn. Gen. Stat. § 29-6d (j) to require that "[o]n and after October 1, 2024, such guidelines shall contain provisions concerning under which circumstances an officer shall not pause recording on such equipment." This policy also includes the revisions added pursuant to General Notice 24-05, which were included in the statewide policy issued March 13, 2024, in accordance with P.A. 23-47. These revisions are codified in Conn. Gen. Stat. §29-6d (f) (1) and (2).

b. Resolving officer-involved incidents and complaints by providing an objectively independent record of events.

c. Improving agency transparency by allowing the public to see video evidence of police activities and encounters in accordance with applicable laws regarding public disclosure.

d. Identifying and strengthening officer performance by using footage for officer training and monitoring when appropriate and consistent with the law.

e. Improving evidence documentation for investigation, prosecutions, and administrative reviews of employee performance and/or civil actions.

B. Policy

1. All body-worn recording equipment and dashboard cameras and media associated with the body-worn recording equipment and dashboard cameras, data, images, video/audio and metadata captured, recorded, or otherwise produced by the body-worn and dashboard cameras shall not be viewed, copied, released, disclosed, or disseminated in any form or manner outside the parameters of this policy pursuant to the department's FOI policy and practice.

2. Each law enforcement unit shall require usage of a dashboard camera in each police patrol vehicle used by any police officer employed by such unit in accordance with the unit's policy adopted by the unit based upon these guidelines.

3. Each police officer shall use body-worn camera equipment while interacting with the public in such sworn member's law enforcement capacity in accordance with the department's policy, if adopted by the department and based upon these guidelines. This includes all police officers assigned to other agencies as well as police officers assigned to state and federal task forces. Police officers who are federally deputized task force officers shall comply with this policy as modified by the policy of the federal agency to which they are assigned.[2]

4. Police officers working non-uniform assignments shall adhere to the requirements for the wear and activation of body-worn camera equipment as set forth in this policy except when such wear would hinder the performance of duty or readily identify the officer as a police officer when such identification would be detrimental to their assignment, duties, or mission.

5. This policy is not intended to govern the use of surreptitious or covert recording devices used in undercover operations.

C. Definitions

1. Body-worn camera recording equipment (BWC): An electronic recording device that is capable of recording audio and video. C.G.S.§ 29-6d(3).

2. Dashboard Camera (DC): A camera that affixes to a dashboard or windshield of a police vehicle that electronically records video of the view through the vehicle's windshield and has an electronic audio recorder that may be operated remotely. C.G.S. § 29-6d(4) and § 7-277b.

[2] Refer to policy prepared by the U.S. Department of Justice entitled "Use of Body-Worn Cameras by Federally Deputized Task Force Officers." (October 2020)

3. Law Enforcement Unit: Any agency or department of this state or a subdivision or municipality thereof, or, if created and governed by a memorandum of agreement under section 47-65c, of the Mashantucket Pequot Tribe or the Mohegan Tribe of Indians of Connecticut, whose primary functions include the enforcement of criminal or traffic laws, the preservation of public order, the protection of life and property, or the prevention, detection, or investigation of crime. C.G.S. § 7-294a.

4. Police officer: A sworn member of a law enforcement unit or any member of a law enforcement unit who performs police duties. C.G.S. § 29-6d(2).

5. Police Patrol Vehicle: Any state or local police vehicle other than an administrative vehicle in which an occupant is wearing body worn camera equipment, a bicycle, a motor scooter, an all-terrain vehicle, an electric personal assistive mobility device, or an animal control vehicle. C.G.S. § 29-6d(5).

6. Digital Multimedia Video Files (DMVF): Digital multimedia files consist of all digital recordings, to include but not limited to audio, video, photographs, and their associated metadata. Metadata includes any digital identifiers that are captured as part of the actual recording, such as date/time, GPS coordinates, labeling, etc.

7. Evidence Transfer Management (ETM): ETM is the transfer of media from the body-worn and dashboard cameras to a secured server or other reliable secured storage source. The method of evidence transfer management for body-worn and dashboard cameras shall be approved by the Chief of Police.

8. Turning BWC on or off: Turning BWC on or off means to press the selection button on the BWC to shut on or off power to the device.

9. Deactivate: Deactivate means to press the designated selection button to stop the BWC from actively recording video and audio while the power to the device remains on. Deactivating the BWC will terminate the active video recording, and a new recording will be initiated upon reactivation of the device.

10. Mute: Mute means to press the designated selection button on the BWC to cause the audio to stop recording while the video continues to record.

11. Unmute: Unmute means to press the designated selection button on the BWC to resume recording the audio of a continuous video record.

D. Procedures

1. Beginning of the shift procedures

   a. Body-worn and dashboard cameras shall be operated in accordance with the manufacturer's recommended guidelines, department training and department policies and procedures.

   b. Prior to the beginning of each shift, the police officer issued or assigned a body-worn and dashboard cameras shall test and perform an inspection to ensure that the body-worn and dashboard cameras have a properly charged battery and are functioning correctly.

(1) If problems are encountered with any component of the system, the affected body-worn or dashboard camera shall not be used, and the police officer shall arrange for repair or replacement through department established procedures. The Police Officer should be immediately provided a replacement BWC/DC, when practicable.

(2) Malfunctions, damage, loss, or theft of any body-worn or dashboard camera shall be immediately reported by the police officer to the on-duty shift supervisor or other responsible person as designated by the Chief of Police. The Police Officer should be immediately provided a replacement BWC/DC, if practicable.

2. Use and activation of body-worn recording equipment and dashboard cameras.

a. Each police officer shall wear body-worn recording equipment on such officer's outer-most garment and shall position such equipment above the midline of such officer's torso when using such equipment. C.G.S. § 29-6d(c)(2).

b. Police officers shall activate the body-worn camera while interacting with the public in a law enforcement capacity, except as provided in section (3) of this policy. C.G.S. § 29-6d(c)(1).

(1) For the purposes of this policy, "interacting with the public in a law enforcement capacity," means that a police officer is in personal contact with one or more members of the public, the purpose of which is to conduct a self-initiated investigation into, or to respond to a third-party complaint involving, the possible commission of any offense, violation, or infraction. Personal contact refers to direct and individualized interaction or communication between a police officer and one or more members of the public.

(2) In addition, body-worn and dashboard cameras shall be activated to record the following:

a. Vehicular pursuits;

b. Motor vehicle stops;

c. Motorist assists;

d. The taking of statements from suspects, witnesses and victims;

e. The conducting of interviews with suspects, witnesses and victims;

f. Transportation and processing of prisoners;

g. Any incident or event not otherwise prohibited by this policy, which may be dangerous, unpredictable, or potentially useful for department training purposes;

h. Situations where a police officer, by reason of training and experience, determines that the incident should be documented on video;

i. Foot pursuits;

j. Any incident or event not otherwise prohibited by this policy, where the police officer anticipates a use of force encounter may occur; and

k. Serving arrest and search warrants.

Note: At no time shall police officers disregard officer safety or the safety of the public for the purpose of activating or utilizing the body-worn and dashboard cameras.

c. Once the body-worn and dashboard cameras are activated for the purpose of documenting an interaction with the public in a law enforcement capacity, it shall remain activated until the interaction with the public has concluded to ensure the integrity of the recording, except as otherwise provided for by law or by this policy.

(1) Additional police officers arriving on a scene that have been issued or assigned a body-worn and dashboard cameras shall also record the interaction with the public and shall also continue to record until the completion of the incident.

(2) For purposes of this policy, conclusion of an interaction with the public occurs when a police officer terminates his/her law enforcement contact with a member of the public.

(3) It is important to capture all conversations with the public during an interaction with law enforcement. Police Officers shall not deactivate BWC during an interaction with the public in a law enforcement capacity. However, police officers may mute their BWC prior to the conclusion of an interaction with the public whenever police officers are not in personal contact with members of the public, unless otherwise provided for in this policy.

3. When body-worn recording equipment and dashboard cameras are not to be activated or should be deactivated:

a. Except as otherwise provided by any agreement between a law enforcement unit and the federal government, no police officer shall use body-worn or dashboard recording equipment to intentionally record:[3]

(1) A communication with other law enforcement unit personnel, except that which may be recorded as the officer performs his or her duties;

(2) An encounter with an undercover officer or informant;

(3) When an officer is on break or is otherwise engaged in a personal activity;

(4) A person undergoing a medical or psychological evaluation, procedure or treatment;

(5) Any person other than a suspect to a crime if an officer is wearing his or her body-worn camera in a hospital or other medical facility setting;

(6) In a mental health facility, unless responding to a call involving a suspect to a crime who is thought to be present in the facility;

(7) Any private conversation to which the officer is not a party;[4]

[3] See Conn. Gen. Stat. § 29-6d(g)(1)(A)-(F).
[4] Conn. Gen. Stat. §53a-157-§ 53a-159 (eavesdropping statutes).

(8) Any telephonic conversation unless specifically authorized by law while in the performance of their official duties;[5]

(9) A strip search;[6] or

(10) In a locker room, changing room or restroom, unless confronting a violent or assaultive suspect or in an incident involving the anticipated use of force, or an incident requiring police intervention or service response such as an overdose, suicide or other emergency involving the public which may take place in a locker room, changing room or bathroom.[7]

b. Deactivation of body-worn or dashboard camera under certain circumstances:

(1) Although generally, body-worn and dashboard cameras should remain activated until the conclusion of an incident, police officers may deactivate the body-worn and dashboard cameras should such officers determine that, based upon the circumstances; the investigation could be significantly hampered if the recording were to continue. Whenever possible, police officers should consult with supervisors before making the decision to deactivate their body-worn and dashboard cameras.

(2) Whenever possible, a police officer who deactivates the body-worn and dashboard cameras during an event in which this policy otherwise requires recording, shall both record on the camera the reason for the interruption or termination of recording prior to deactivating the body-worn and dashboard cameras, and document such event in his/her report.

c. When circumstances prevent a police officer from activating a body-worn or dashboard camera or cause a camera to be deactivated in accordance with the guidelines established within this policy, the officer shall activate or reactivate their cameras as soon as practical.

4. Malfunction of body-worn and dashboard cameras

a. If any malfunctioning or unintentional failure to record in accordance with this policy occurs, the police officer shall document the reason and notify his/her supervisor regarding the lack of recording. Such documentation shall be in a manner determined by the Chief of Police.

5. End of shift procedures

a. Police Officers shall ensure that all files from body-worn and dashboard cameras are securely downloaded and retained in accordance with section I of this policy, with sufficient frequency to ensure that there remains adequate data storage available for recording future incidents.

b. Officers shall cause the recorded video to be stored, downloaded, transferred, or otherwise saved and labeled or cataloged as evidence in the following circumstances:

(1) Any incident where an arrest is made or may be made, and/or a search is conducted;

[5] Conn. Gen. Stat. §§ 54-41a through 54-41t (wiretapping statutes).
[6] Conn. Gen. Stat. § 54-33k (strip search statute).
[7] Restatement Torts 2d §652Aand 652B (invasion of privacy).

(2) An event that captures an officer's reportable use of force in the discharge of his/her official duties;

(3) Any interaction with the public where the officer determines that it would be prudent to retain the recording for longer than the minimum retention period set forth in this policy;

(4) An event that is a major motor vehicle or criminal incident involving death, serious injury, or catastrophic property damage.

E. Training

1. No police officer shall use body-worn and dashboard cameras prior to being trained in the use of such equipment, and in the retention of data created by such equipment. Every police officer must receive annual training on the proper use, care and maintenance of the body-worn recording equipment and the retention of data created by such equipment. C.G.S. 7-294s.

F. Responsibilities of Supervisory Personnel

1. Chief of Police

   a. The Chief of Police shall designate one or more department members to oversee and administer the storage and management of all digital multimedia video files generated by the use of body-worn recording devices and dashboard cameras.

   b. The Chief of Police may authorize a BWC/DC policy that provides additional guidelines and training requirements not mandated by this policy, provided such policy does not conflict with state or federal law, or the provisions set forth in this policy.

   c. The Chief of Police shall ensure that the audio and video files and other data collected by the body worn recording equipment and dashboard cameras are retained for the duration of time set forth in the appropriate record retention schedules established by the Office of the Public Records Administrator.

   d. The Chief of Police shall ensure that the audio and video files and other data collected by the body worn recording equipment and dashboard cameras that are subject to a preservation request or court order are appropriately catalogued and preserved.

   e. The Chief of Police shall ensure that the audio and video files and other data collected by the body worn recording equipment and dashboard cameras are not erased or otherwise disposed of until properly authorized by the Office of the Public Records Administrator or as duly authorized or ordered by a court of law.

   f. The Chief of Police shall approve the method of evidence transfer management (ETM) from the body-worn and dashboard cameras to a secured storage server, cloud, website, or other secured digital media storage.

2. Supervisors

   a. Supervisors shall ensure that police officers are utilizing body-worn and dashboard cameras in accordance with policy and procedures as defined herein.

b. Supervisors shall periodically inspect body-worn and dashboard camera equipment assigned to police officers to ensure proper operability in accordance with testing protocols provided through training and manufacturer's recommendations.

c. Supervisors or other persons designated by the Chief of Police may periodically review body-worn and dashboard camera recordings of traffic stops and citizen contacts in accordance with this policy as well as reports generated as a result of these incidents in order to:

(1) Ensure body-worn and dashboard camera equipment is operating properly;

(2) Ensure that police officers are utilizing the body-worn and dashboard cameras appropriately and in accordance with policies and procedures; and

(3) Identify any areas in which additional training, policy revisions or guidance is required.

d. Supervisors shall ensure that all body-worn and dashboard camera video files are appropriately preserved in accordance with this policy.

G. Authorized Personnel Access to Uploaded Digital Multimedia Video Files

1. General access to digital multimedia video files shall be granted to authorized personnel only. Accessing, copying, or releasing any digital multimedia video files for other than official law enforcement purposes is strictly prohibited, except as otherwise required by state and federal statues, policies, and procedures.

a. The Chief of Police or his/her designee may review specific body-worn and dashboard camera digital multimedia video files for the purpose of training, performance review, critique, early intervention inquiries, civil claims, administrative inquiry, or other articulable reason.

b. A police officer may review a recording from his or her body-worn and/or dashboard recording equipment in order to assist such officer with the preparation of a report or otherwise in the performance of his or her duties.

c. If a police officer is giving a formal statement about the use of force or if a police officer is the subject of a disciplinary investigation arising from a use of force in which a recording from body-worn recording equipment or a dashboard camera with a remote recorder, is being considered as part of a review of an incident, the officer shall (1) have the right to review such recording in the presence of the officer's attorney or labor representative, and (2) have the right to review recordings from other body-worn recording equipment capturing the officer's image or voice during the incident. Not later than forty-eight hours following an officer's review of a recording under subdivision (1) of this subsection, or if the officer does not review the recording, not later than ninety-six hours following the recorded incident, whichever is earlier, such recording shall be disclosed, upon request, to the public, subject to the provisions of C.G.S. 29-6d subsection (g). Public disclosure may be delayed if the officer, due to a medical or physical response or an acute psychological stress response to the incident, is not reasonably able to review a recording under this subdivision, but in no event shall disclosure be delayed more than one hundred forty-four hours following the recorded event.

d. If a request is made for public disclosure of a recording from body-worn recording equipment or a dashboard camera of an alleged use of force incident about which (A) a police officer has not been asked to give a formal statement about the alleged use of force, or (B) a disciplinary investigation has not been initiated, any police officer whose image or voice is captured on the recording shall have the right to review such recording in the presence of the officer's attorney or labor representative. Not later than forty-eight hours following an officer's review of a recording under this subdivision, or if the officer does not review the recording, not later than ninety-six hours following the request for disclosure, whichever is earlier, such recording shall be disclosed, upon request, to the public, subject to the provisions of C.G.S. § 29-6d(g). Public disclosure may be delayed if the officer, due to a medical or physical response or an acute psychological stress response to the incident, is not reasonably able to review a recording under this subdivision, but in no event shall disclosure be delayed more than one hundred forty-four hours following the recorded event.

2. Under no circumstances shall any individual with access to body-worn and dashboard camera media or data files be allowed to use, show, reproduce or release recordings for the purpose of ridicule or embarrassment of any police officer or individual, or for other non-law enforcement related purposes. This includes disclosure of any portion of a body-worn and dashboard cameras video file to a media organization unless such disclosure has been approved by the Chief of Police or his/her designee.

3. Digital multimedia video files may be reviewed by individuals other than the recording police officer in any of the following situations:

   a. By a department member investigating or adjudicating a complaint regarding a specific act of officer conduct;

   b. By technical support staff for purposes of assessing proper functioning of body-worn and dashboard cameras;

   c. By the internal affairs unit or other unit or person(s) designated by the Chief of Police, when participating in an official misconduct investigation concerning a specific act or officer conduct alleged in a complaint of misconduct;

   d. By a sworn law enforcement officer who is participating in a criminal investigation;

   e. By the municipality's legal representative;

   f. Any other personnel designated by the Chief of Police;

   g. Law enforcement personnel may review a recording from their body-worn and dashboard recording equipment in order to assist such officer in providing a statement as a witness to events which are the subject of a department internal administrative inquiry, including officer shooting investigations;

   h. By representatives of the Division of Criminal Justice, municipal attorneys, Office of the Attorney General, retained counsel and other representatives authorized by the municipality, such as municipal insurance carriers, in the course of their official duties; or

   i. By other department personnel as authorized by the Chief of Police or his/her designee.

H. Releasing or Duplicating Body-worn and Dashboard Cameras Recordings

1. Releasing body-worn and dashboard camera digital multimedia video files

   a. Processing Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests:

      (1) Video, audio, and other files created using body worn recording equipment and dashboard cameras are generally considered public records and are subject to disclosure in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act (Conn. Gen. Stat. Secs. 1-200, et seq.) Such records are also subject to the exemptions to disclosure contained within the FOI Act.

      (2) The following records created using body worn recording equipment or a dashboard camera are NOT subject to disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act and any such record shall be confidential. *See* C.G.S. 29-6d(g)(2):

         i. The recording of an occurrence or situation described in paragraphs D3(a)(1)-(6), above.

         ii. The recording of an occurrence or situation described in paragraphs D3(a)(7)-(10), above, if disclosure could reasonably be expected to constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy or if exempt as otherwise provided by any federal law or state statute.

         iii. The recording of the scene of an incident that involves (i) a victim of domestic or sexual abuse, (ii) a victim of homicide or suicide, or (iii) a deceased victim of an accident, if disclosure could reasonably be expected to constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy in the case of any such victim described in this subparagraph.

         iv. The recording of a minor,[8] except that a record of a minor shall be disclosed if (i) the minor and the parent or guardian of such minor consent to the disclosure of such record, (ii) a police officer is the subject of an allegation of misconduct made by such minor or the parent or guardian of such minor, and the person representing such officer in an investigation of such alleged misconduct requests disclosure of such record for the sole purpose of preparing a defense to such allegation, or (iii) a person is charged with a crime and defense counsel for such person requests disclosure of such record for the sole purpose of assisting in such person's defense and the discovery of such record as evidence is otherwise discoverable.

      (3) All FOIA requests for body-worn and dashboard camera digital multimedia video files shall be processed through the office of the Chief of Police or his/her designee.

2. Duplicating body-worn and dashboard camera digital multimedia video files

   a. When a police officer who is required to produce a digital multimedia video file pursuant to a subpoena or other court order, the Chief of Police or other designee shall arrange, prior to the date of the court appearance, for a copy of the required portion of the original video file to be duplicated.

[8] Conn. Gen. Stat. Sec. 1-1d defines "minor" as a person under the age of eighteen.

b. The original video file, as well as any duplicate copy, shall be held as evidence in accordance with this policy.

I. Storage and Retention

1. Digital multimedia video files shall be maintained in an approved storage location, such as a server, storage device, cloud storage, website or other approved secure storage media, authorized by the Chief of Police.

2. All digital multimedia video files shall be securely stored in accordance with state record retention laws and department policy.

    a. Digital multimedia video files not reproduced for evidentiary purposes or otherwise required to be preserved in accordance with this policy shall be maintained for a period of a minimum of ninety (90) days.

    b. Digital multimedia video files shall be preserved while a case remains open and under investigation, or for a minimum of four (4) years while criminal or civil proceedings are ongoing or reasonably anticipated, or in accordance with the applicable records retention schedule, whichever is greater.

    c. Nothing in these guidelines shall require a law enforcement unit to store such data for a period longer than one year, except in the case where the unit knows the data is pertinent to any ongoing civil, criminal, or administrative matter. C.G.S. 29-6d(j).

        (1) Digital multimedia video files shall be preserved in accordance with any specific request by representatives of the Division of Criminal Justice, municipal attorney, Office of the Attorney General, retained counsel and other authorized claims representatives in the course of their official duties.

        (2) Digital multimedia video files shall be preserved in response to oral, electronic, or written preservation requests from any member of the public where such requests indicate that litigation may be reasonably anticipated. All such preservation requests shall promptly be brought to the attention of the recipient's supervisor and the agency's legal representative (legal affairs unit, city attorney, town attorney, corporate counsel, etc.).

END