

Body-Worn Cameras

Body-worn cameras (BWCs) allow agencies to document police-public contacts, arrests, and critical incidents. BWCs can also be utilized for training and officer accountability. However, prior to implementing a BWC program, law enforcement agencies should develop policies and procedures governing the use of this technology.

- Agencies should develop policies that provide officers with guidance regarding when to **activate** their BWCs. This may include whenever the officer is interacting with a member of the public or during contact with a victim, witness, or suspect.
- Agencies should also identify situations where BWCs' usage is **not appropriate**, to include when an officer is interacting with undercover officers or confidential informants; in locations where there is an expectation of privacy, such as restrooms or locker rooms; and when the officer is engaged in personal activities.
- BWCs should not be **deactivated** until the event that prompted the activation has concluded and/or the officer has physically left the scene. If an officer feels it is necessary to stop recording within constraints of policy, they should verbally indicate their intent to stop the recording before stopping the device and document the reason for the deactivation in a written report.
- Agencies should consider how their policies will address BWC recordings involving **victims and witnesses**. This should include whether these individuals will be notified that they are being recorded and whether officers should honor their requests for the BWC to be turned off.
- While BWCs can be useful in **documenting evidence** at crime scenes, they should not take the place of established evidence collection procedures as defined by agency policy.
- Agencies should be aware of the **limitations** of BWCs, to include the fact that the camera will capture images only where the lens is pointed. This might not correspond to what the officer is viewing at the time if they are looking in a direction that is different than where the camera is pointed.
- **BWC files** should be downloaded periodically and within a designated amount of time. All files should be considered agency property and officers should be prohibited from editing, altering, erasing, duplicating, copying, and sharing BWC recordings without proper approval.
- Prior to implementing a BWC program, agencies should consider **storage requirements**. BWC recordings should be retained for a specified amount of time that is consistent with applicable laws and agency policy regarding data retention.
- **Regular review** of BWC recordings allows supervisors to ensure that the BWC is being used in accordance with agency policy and to identify any areas in which additional officer training, guidance, or discipline may be required.