

Santa Cruz Police Department

Body-Worn Camera Frequently Asked Questions



#1 What is a body-worn camera?

A small, battery-powered camera worn by police officers on their uniform that captures interactions with the public from the police officers point of view.

#2 Why does Santa Cruz Police Department want to have their officers use body cameras?

The Santa Cruz Police Department is implementing a body worn camera program with the intent of creating greater transparency and trust in its contacts with the public.

#3. What benefit is there to police officers wearing cameras?

Research has shown that when officers are outfitted with BWC, citizen complaints decrease, uses of force incidents decrease, subject behavior improves, and transparency and public trust are enhanced.

Cost savings come with decreased litigation.

#4 Will the Santa Cruz Police Department have a policy governing the use of body cameras?

Yes. The policy is a "working" draft is available here. The policy is subject to change depending on our assessment of the equipment's effectiveness. The Chief's Advisory Committee, composed of community members, reviewed the policy in May 2017. The department considered the suggestions and comments provided by the community stakeholders. Where legally possible, amendments were made to the document.

#5 When will police officers be recording with their body cameras?

Police officers will activate their body camera whenever they respond to calls for service or have citizen contacts where they anticipate taking law enforcement action.

#6 How will I know if I am being recorded? Will the body camera have a flashing light or another indicator that it is recording?

For officer safety concerns, the body camera will not have a flashing light or another indicator that it is recording. The best rule of thumb is to assume that the officer is always recording while taking law enforcement action.

#7 Does an officer have to stop recording if I ask him/her to?

No. A police officer is not required to stop recording upon request.

#8 Are there places where officers cannot use their body cameras?

Officers will not record public protests, or in places where an expectation of privacy exists, such as restrooms or hospitals — unless there's reasonable suspicion a crime is being committed or the recording of the location is material to a criminal investigation.

#9 How many cameras will the Santa Cruz Police Department deploy when the program is complete?

Eleven SCPD officers will be testing body worn cameras that could eventually become standard issue for all patrol officers. Approximately 110 cameras will be deployed when the body-worn program is fully implemented.

#10 Do body cameras record both audio and video?

Yes.

#11 Will the camera have night vision or infrared capability?

No. The camera will be able to record in low light conditions comparable to what the human eye can see.

#12 Where will the video be stored?

The video will be stored on secure servers in compliance with federal Criminal Justice Information System (CJIS) standards. BWC data will be stored in an online cloud database by a reliable third-party vendor. The vendor's system has a built-in audit trail to prevent data tampering or unauthorized access.

#13 How long will the video be kept?

All video will be kept for a minimum of 60 days, but will be maintained longer depending on the type of incident in compliance with state record retention laws.

#14 How can I know if a video has been altered?

Police officers will not be able to alter or delete original videos. The system will be designed with security “hash tags” that will mark the original videos so that any alteration can be identified.