

VALDOSTA POLICE DEPARTMENT
GENERAL ORDER 300-21
“Audio/Video Recording Procedures”

CHIEF OF POLICE: *B. Childers* **CALEA STANDARD:** 41.3.8

EFFECTIVE DATE: 11/09/98

INDEX AS: Digital In-Car Video/Body Cameras/
Interview Room Tapes
Real Time Video Interface (RTVI),
Other Recording Devices

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Purpose: To establish rules and regulations regarding the use and officer responsibility for use of audio and video recording equipment in patrol vehicles, use of Body Worn Camera (BWC) Systems, and the operation and handling of audio/video systems and their recordings in general.

Policy: To establish firm operating procedures and guidelines for the use of audio/video equipment in equipped vehicles, Body Worn Camera (BWC) Systems, designated interview rooms, and other audio/video camera systems used by the Valdosta Police Department. It establishes the procedure for the usage and storage of all audio/video footage obtained by the Valdosta Police Department.

I. GENERAL PROCEDURES

- A. When audio/video equipment is available, events/incidents, which possibly have evidentiary value, will be recorded. Once recording equipment is activated, the equipment should not be deactivated until the entire event/incident is concluded unless special circumstances warrant otherwise. Each officer should exercise sound judgement in determining which events/incidents are of evidentiary value and which are not.
- B. Officers will ensure that the audio is activated whenever the camera is operating (when audio is available). At times it may be appropriate to enable audio recording for evidentiary purposes although the camera is not recording video.
- C. Officers will not intentionally erase or record over any digital audio/video footage or substitute any media storage for another that is assigned to them, in an attempt to alter, conceal, or hide the events captured on the video/audio media.
- D. Departmental approved and issued audio/video recording equipment and audio/video storage media will be used while on-duty which includes extra-duty employment. Personal audio/video recording devices may be used only in exigent circumstances or

- when departmental equipment is unavailable. All audio/video, videotapes, other recordings and storage media, of events and incidents depicted thereon are the property of the Valdosta Police Department.
- E. All audio and/or video recorded on storage media (memory disks, compact disks, etc.) which has evidential value will be secured in property/evidence prior to the end of the officer's tour of duty (see procedures below for storage of in-car camera and interview room audio/video events). Any audio and/or video recorded which could provide supplementary information pertaining to allegations or potential complaints (regardless if factual or not) against a police employee shall also be entered into property/evidence prior to the end of the officer's tour of duty.
- F. Only employees authorized by the Chief of Police may disseminate the contents of a department audio/video system. The release of information requested through open records requests will be subject to the same statutory exemptions from disclosure as any other departmental records. Prior to releasing any audio/video recordings, proper redaction shall be completed.

II. IN-CAR CAMERA DIGITAL RECORDING PROCEDURES

- A. Patrol vehicles equipped with a digital in-car camera system shall include a digital two video camera (one in the front windshield area and one in the back seat area compartment of the patrol vehicle), a hard drive storage system, and an audio body microphone capable of recording audio footage and activating the video system by remote;
- B. Patrol vehicles equipped with an in-car camera shall have a video hard drive maintained in the equipped vehicle. Prior to beginning their tour of duty, the officer operating the in-car camera system shall ensure their in-car camera system is powered on and prepared to record video/audio;
- C. When activated, the in-car camera system will complete a log of all activity during the officer's tour of duty, which can be accessed later during playback once transferred to the storage server. The in-car camera system allows the officer to enter a classification (title) for each event recorded on the hard drive, once the system has finished recording. Officers shall enter a classification for all previously recorded audio/video that falls into one of the following categories:
- Arrest;
 - Vehicle Pursuit;
 - Response to Resistance (use of force) Incident;
 - Forcible Felony Incident;

All other recorded events which do not fall into one of the above categories shall automatically be listed as "Default";

- D. All digital video cameras will capture audio/video whenever the emergency lights are activated, when the camera is activated manually on the video hard drive operational console, or when the camera and audio is activated by use of audio body microphone. The camera will then remain operational until the digital in-car camera system is manually deactivated by use of the operational console. Digital video cameras will be activated during any traffic stop, call for service, and/or during any event/incident which has evidentiary value. The camera will be positioned, whenever possible, to capture the violator's vehicle, the license plate, and/or the passenger compartment of the vehicle. All digital video camera systems shall be equipped with a pre-event and post-event recording feature, which shall record video between 45 seconds prior to the activation of the system (video only) and 10 seconds after de-activation of the system (video and audio);
- E. The audio body microphone pack will be clipped to the duty belt/belt area with the body pack microphone attached no lower than chest level.
- F. All sworn personnel will utilize digital in-car camera equipment as outlined below:
1. Patrol vehicles equipped with a digital in-car camera system shall include two digital video cameras (one in the front windshield area and one in the back seat area compartment of the patrol vehicle), a hard drive storage system, an audio body microphone capable of recording audio footage with remote activation, and the ability to review the video by a viewing screen;
 2. All audio/video recorded will be automatically downloaded wirelessly through the use of Wi-Fi access points located at department headquarters or at other download areas as authorized by the Chief of Police. Prior to the officer ending their tour of duty, the officer shall enter the police department parking lot where a Wi-Fi access point will automatically download all audio/video on the officer's in-car camera system hard drive to a secure storage server located at department headquarters. All recordings shall be downloaded before the officer's end of shift. However recordings made after the officer has ended his tour of duty may be downloaded the next scheduled work day unless the recording has significant evidentiary value and is time sensitive to the incident.
 3. The in-car camera system is designed to be tamper-proof, and because the storage server where the audio/video is transferred and stored is secured to prevent tampering, there is no requirement for officers to complete a Property/Evidence Form;
 4. Once the audio/video is transferred to the storage server, that recording can be accessed through designated workstation computers throughout the police department for playback review by agency personnel. The system will not allow previously recorded audio/video to be overwritten or erased at these designated locations. Previously recorded audio/video can be instantly accessed by entering an officer's employee number and a date/time. Supervisory personnel are authorized to review previously recorded audio/video recorded by subordinates to

review past performance, when investigating citizen complaints, and for training purposes.

III. REAL-TIME VIDEO INTERFACE (RTVI)

- A. All patrol vehicles equipped with in-car camera systems shall also have Real-Time Video Interface (RTVI) software installed on in-car computers and the same software shall be installed at designated police department workstations assigned to supervisors and on in-car computers assigned to supervisors. The software referred to as RTVI will allow supervisors to gain remote access into any live or active (powered-on) in-car camera system.
- B. The sole purpose of the RTVI System is to ensure the safety of officers and the public in the field by allowing supervisors to view live video feeds from in-car cameras. Circumstances in which a supervisor may view a live feed from an officer's in-car camera shall be limited to safety issues only unless pre-approved by the Chief of Police. Those circumstances shall be limited to legitimate safety issues such as an officer not responding to their police radio, monitoring of a vehicle pursuit, a potential use of force incident in progress, etc.
- C. The RTVI System will not allow viewing of in-car cameras unless the officer's in-car camera system is powered on.
- D. Each time an officer's in-car camera system's live video feed is accessed, the following mechanisms shall be in-place to ensure the officer is aware of said access:
 - 1. A warning icon shall appear on the officer's in-car computer to indicate the RTVI system is viewing their live video feed;
 - 2. There are two LED lights on the windshield video camera of each in-car camera system. One light reflects the camera is recording and the second light will reflect the RTVI system is viewing live video feed;
 - 3. Last, unless previously approved by the Chief of Police, each time an officer's in-car camera live video feed is viewed, the officer shall be advised of that fact by the viewing supervisor, prior to the officer ending their tour of duty.
- E. The viewing of the RTVI System by a supervisor while their vehicle is in motion to include supervisors who are actively part of a vehicle pursuit is strictly prohibited.
- F. The use of the RTVI system for any purpose other than outlined above must require the approval of the Chief of Police. Any misuse of the RTVI System other than to promote officer and/or public safety, shall result in disciplinary action to the offending supervisors (s). The use of the RTVI system by supervisors viewing live video feeds as part of routine checks on officers without the express approval of the Chief of Police is strictly prohibited.

IV. PERSONAL AUDIO/VIDEO RECORDING DEVICES

Departmental approved and issued audio/video recording equipment and audio/video storage media will be used while on-duty which includes extra-duty employment. Personal audio/video recording devices may be used only in exigent circumstances or when departmental equipment is unavailable. All audio/video, videotapes, other recordings and storage media, of events and incidents depicted thereon are the property of the Valdosta Police Department.

V. BODY WORN CAMERAS (BWC) - (DEPARTMENT ISSUED)

- A. Body Worn Camera (BWC) systems provide an unbiased audio/video recording of events that employees may encounter. These recordings document important information during an officer's tour of duty and during extra-duty employment. The recordings can also protect employees from false allegations of misconduct and can also be used for training purposes. The following procedures shall be followed regarding the use of BWCs:
1. Upon availability, officers shall be issued a department purchased BWC that has been approved for departmental use by the Chief of Police;
 2. Officers equipped with the department issued BWC shall be trained in the operation and care of the equipment prior to its use;
 3. Any officer detecting a defect or operational issue with the BWC shall immediately report this issue to a supervisor who will notify the police department Information Technology Section.
 4. Officers shall not tamper with, alter, erase, delete, attempt to override the BWC in any manner, or attempt to make repairs.
 5. Prior to beginning their tour of duty, officers shall ensure their assigned BWC is fully charged and operational.
 6. BWC's contain sufficient memory to store at least 4 hours of video/audio footage. It shall be the officer's responsibility to regularly download video images from their BWC to ensure the device contains sufficient memory for on-duty use. Officers shall download all data from their assigned BWC on an agency specified computer near the end of their tour of duty. However, recordings made after the officer's last download or after said officer has ended their tour of duty may be downloaded the next scheduled work day unless the recording has significant evidentiary value and is time sensitive to the incident or the officer will be off-duty on the very next duty day. Failure to download the data in the prescribed method will result in disciplinary action.
 7. BWC's shall be activated only when an officer is performing an official duty to include but not limited to:
 - a. Responding to and during calls for service. Officers are not required to maintain the activation of a BWC during lengthy calls for service unless circumstances dictate otherwise. Officers shall reactivate their BWC when the situation resumes;
 - b. Traffic stops/accidents;

- c. Citizen encounters during police investigatory activities. Officers are not required to activate the BWCs during routine, incidental contact with a citizen, such as giving directions or lunch breaks;
 - d. Pursuits;
 - e. Detention, arrest and transportation of a suspect;
 - f. NOTE: There are many situations where the use of the BWC is appropriate. This policy is not intended to describe every possible circumstance. Personnel may activate the system anytime they feel its use would be appropriate and/or valuable to document events.
8. BWC's SHALL NOT be used to record administrative or non-law enforcement activities or actions unless otherwise specified by the Chief of Police. BWC's SHALL NOT be activated in places where a reasonable expectation of privacy exists, such as locker rooms, dressing rooms, restrooms, etc.
 9. Officers shall indicate in reports (incident, miscellaneous, field interview, accident) that a video recording was captured via the BWC.
 10. Recordings downloaded from the BWC will be maintained on a police department server as prescribed by the Georgia Retention Schedule or a longer period of time as designated by the Chief of Police.
 11. Once the audio/video is transferred to the storage server, that recordings can be accessed by designated workstation computers throughout the police department for playback review by agency personnel.
 12. Supervisory personnel are authorized to review previously recorded audio/video recorded by subordinates to review past performance, investigate citizen complaints, and for training purposes.
 13. Officers shall attach their BWC to the front portion of their particular uniform shirt in an area that most closely captures the officer's field of view.

VI. INTERVIEW ROOM DIGITAL RECORDING PROCEDURES

- A. VPD interview rooms located at department headquarters are equipped with a digital/audio system that includes digital video cameras and microphones which store the audio/video recordings to a computer server located in a secure area in department headquarters. The system provides personnel with the ability of playback review of recorded data but it will not allow previously recorded audio/video to be overwritten or erased;
- B. Prior to beginning an interview/interrogation, it shall be the responsibility of the officer conducting the interview/interrogation to log into the interview room recording software at designated department workstations to ensure the recording equipment is operating properly, to enter all data pertaining to the reason for the interview/interrogation, and all information pertaining to the interviewee;
- C. Personnel shall ensure that recording equipment is activated at all times during interviews/interrogations.
- D. The system will complete a log of all recorded interviews/interrogations which can be accessed later during playback once transferred to the storage server;

- E. Once an interview/interrogation is completed, it shall be the responsibility of the officer conducting the interview/interrogation to properly stop the recording, to complete all requirements of the software log, and to log out of the system;

VII. SURVEILLANCE/SECURITY VIDEO CAMERA SYSTEM PROCEDURES

- A. The police department operates surveillance/security video cameras installed at various locations throughout the City of Valdosta to include but not limited to Valdosta Police Headquarters, the Mildred Hunter Community Center, Valdosta Housing Authority Facilities, Martin Luther King Jr. Monument, etc.
- B. All cameras are controlled by and connected to video management servers located in the computer server room at Valdosta Police Headquarters and at the City of Valdosta Traffic Engineering Office. Access to the servers are strictly controlled and limited to Information Technology (IT) Personnel and any other personnel as authorized by the Chief of Police and/or the city Traffic Engineer.
- C. Access to monitor and view the camera system shall be for official use only and access to specific cameras shall be available based on user-rights privileges for authorized personnel for each specific location. Only law enforcement personnel as authorized by the Chief of Police shall have access to the entire camera system and such access shall be for official law enforcement use only. User-rights privileges settings to access the system shall be approved by the Chief of Police or his designee.
- D. Authorized personnel may monitor the video camera system from computers which have internet access. Monitoring of the camera system shall be restricted for official use only based on user-rights privileges and at no time shall the camera system be utilized in any manner to infringe on the privacy rights of others.
- E. The surveillance/security video camera system software provides for an activity log which records user activity and may be utilized for playback review of said activity by individual users. Department personnel who utilize the video camera system for activity deemed not to be official use or use the video camera system in any way to infringe on the rights of others shall be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.
- F. The surveillance/security video camera system will not allow previously recorded video to be overwritten or erased at authorized user computers. Deletion of recorded video shall only be accomplished at the video camera servers located in the secured server room and shall only be deleted based on a retention schedule with a maximum of 14 days, as established by the Chief of Police.
- G. Recorded surveillance/security video featuring criminal activity shall be downloaded at authorized user workstations and such downloaded video is considered evidence and shall be documented and stored in accordance with General Order 300-20, Evidence Storage.

VIII. EVIDENCE CUSTODIAN RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. The Evidence Custodian shall be responsible for safeguarding all digital audio/video stored in property/evidence;
- B. Stored audio/video needed for court or other purposes as approved by the Chief of Police may be released by the Evidence Custodian. When requesting previously recorded audio/video from a digital in-car camera system or BWC, the Evidence Custodian or designated personnel responsible for copying in-car camera audio/video and/or BWC audio/video shall make a copy of the requested event by burning the audio/video to a non-rewritable compact disk. When requesting a copy of audio/video footage from previously recorded BWC audio video and/or in-car camera footage, the officer shall complete a VPD Form 300-21, Mobile Video Request Form, and forward the request to the Evidence Custodian or designated personnel responsible for copying the audio/video. Compact disks containing a copy of the audio/video recording shall be provided to the prosecutor as part of criminal prosecutions and to fulfill discovery requirements;
- C. Evidentiary media (non-rewritable compact disks, media cards, etc.) containing audio/video recordings will be entered into property/evidence and using a property/evidence form. If recorded video from the surveillance/security video camera system featuring criminal activity is considered evidence, it shall be downloaded at authorized user workstations, copied to a non-rewritable compact disk, documented on a property/evidence receipt, and placed into the property/evidence section in accordance with General Order 300-20, Evidence Storage.
- D. All audio/video recorded from a digital in-car camera system or on any other media shall be retained for a minimum period of 2 years, 3 months, unless the recording is part of an arrest incident, at which time the recording will be retained for 5 years or depending on the case designation as directed by the Georgia Records Retention Schedule for Local Governments. All audio/video recordings from the BWC system shall be retained for a minimum period of 6 months unless the media is part of an arrest incident, at which time the media will be retained for 5 years or depending on the case designation as directed by the Georgia Records Retention Schedule for Local Government. All video captured from the surveillance/security video camera system shall be retained for a maximum period of 14 days at which time all recorded video is overwritten. All video recorded which is related to criminal incidents shall be downloaded and stored as evidence as directed by the Georgia Records Retention Schedule for Local Governments.
- E. In the event of an unintentional activation of the BWC during non-enforcement or non-investigative activities, such as restroom or meal break, or in other areas where reasonable expectation of privacy exists, officers may request recording deletion. A memorandum detailing the circumstances of the unintentional recording will be forwarded via the chain of command to the Chief of Police. If approved, the actual deletion shall be documented in the BWC Software Management System, reflecting the circumstances of the deletion and the deleting administrator.

