

Georgia Department of Public Safety

Policy Manual

SUBJECT BODY WORN CAMERA (BWC) SYSTEM	POLICY NUMBER 12.02
DISTRIBUTION ALL EMPLOYEES	REVISED DATE 5/17/2022
	POLICY REVIEWED 5/17/2022

12.02.1 Purpose

This policy shall provide a guideline for the use and activation of body worn cameras (BWC) and the BWC system (BWC System) authorized by the Department, including the storage, duplication, and retention of BWC Recordings.

12.02.2 Policy

The Department recognizes that the BWC System provides law enforcement support for certain ground operations that are generally unsupported by the Department's patrol vehicles and corresponding dash cam video system. BWC Systems are therefore assigned and issued to those sworn members, units, teams, and operations of the Department that are specifically designated for such use. Dash cam video equipment is governed by Policy #12.03 - Mobile Video/Audio Recording.

12.02.3 Definitions

- A. BWC - Body Worn Camera - is a mobile video recording device designed for attachment to a law enforcement member at the optimal location intended for its use. A BWC is not for permanent mounting in a patrol vehicle.
- B. DVR - Digital Video Recorder - is a BWC System component intended to process and store evidence collected through the connected BWC and microphones.
- C. Camera Head - is that portion of the BWC that houses the camera and microphone, as attached to the DVR.
- D. Wi-Fi Base – is the docking station installed in a member's assigned patrol vehicle for the purpose of uploading recorded events, and synchronization between the in-car 4RE recording system and the member's BWC.
- E. BWC System – is the full unit comprised of the components, including a BWC, DVR, Camera Head, and Wi-Fi Base.
- F. BWC Recording – is the video/audio footage generated from an activated BWC through the BWC System.
- G. Activate or Activation of a BWC – means to trigger the recording function of the BWC.
- H. Use of a BWC – means utilization of a BWC, subject to activation of the recording function. For purposes of this the BWC policy, the term "activation" should include the "use" of the BWC. However, "using" the BWC does not necessarily mean that the recording function has been activated.

12.02.4 Procedures

A. Application

1. Only the Department's sworn members, units, teams, and/or operations specifically selected, determined, and authorized for use of the BWC System by the Commissioner, or his designee shall utilize any component of the system.
2. Only a BWC System authorized by the Department shall be utilized.
3. A BWC System is intended to document evidence for criminal prosecutions of those who violate the law.
4. Supervisors are responsible for ensuring that all subordinates comply with this policy.

B. Issuance, Installation, Maintenance, and Repair.

1. The Department's Technology Section shall store every component of the BWC System that has not been issued, issue such equipment to those sworn members designated and authorized for use by the Department, maintain and repair the BWC System technology components, and manage the corresponding firmware and device configurations, unless any such service or services are otherwise provided by the vendor.
2. Fleet Services and Technology personnel shall perform Wi-Fi Base installations, relocations, and related repairs unless such service is otherwise provided by the vendor.
3. Members shall not add, remove, alter, modify, or otherwise change a BWC System or component from the original. Approval from the Fleet Services Supervisor shall be obtained prior to any component relocation.
4. A damaged or malfunctioning BWC or BWC System shall not be utilized. Any such damage or malfunction shall be reported to the member's immediate supervisor and the DPS Technology Section as soon as practicable. A malfunctioning BWC or BWC System component shall be taken out of service and a corresponding replacement shall be issued if available.

C. BWC System Use (Not Activation)

1. A sworn member issued a BWC System shall use it during his/her assigned duties unless otherwise authorized by his/her immediate supervisor.
2. A sworn member shall only use the BWC System assigned to him/her, unless otherwise authorized by his/her immediate supervisor.
3. This policy applies to Off-Duty Police Employment. However, a BWC System shall not be used for Secondary Employment. (See Outside Employment, DPS Policy 5.03).
4. The sworn member issued a BWC System shall make every effort to ensure that it is operating and functioning properly at the beginning of his/her respective shift, including but not limited to confirming the correct date, time, and assigned user information.
5. A BWC shall be worn on the sworn member's outermost garment, as follows:
 - a. The BWC camera head shall be mounted on the garment, near the center of the torso area, between the top of the garment and no lower than the bottom of the pocket;

- b. Consistent with attachment to the outermost garment, the BWC shall be worn in such a manner as to ensure the optimal, unobstructed view of the user's response to an incident;
- c. Cables connecting the Camera Head to the DVR shall be worn behind the garment to which the camera head is mounted; and
- d. The DVR portion of the BWC shall be mounted/carried on the sworn member's gun belt, such that he/she can easily activate recording on the BWC.

D. BWC Activation

1. In instances of a designee of a BWC System operating an issued patrol vehicle, the BWC System should be synced with and activated by the same mechanisms that activate the dash cam system.
2. Except as otherwise provided in this policy, the sworn member shall activate his/her BWC for recording when participating in:
 - a. A law enforcement response, including but not limited to responding to a dispatched call or request for an agency assist;
 - b. A pedestrian stop;
 - c. A vehicle stop;
 - d. Detainment or detention of a suspect;
 - e. An arrest;
 - f. Engaging a subject that the sworn member has reasonable suspicion has committed, is committing, or may be involved in a criminal activity;
 - g. Contact with a member of the public at such time as the sworn member reasonably believes the encounter has begun to require a law enforcement response or action;
 - h. An incident, event, or consensual encounter with a member or members of the public when the sworn member reasonably believes that BWC activation is appropriate and beneficial; or
 - i. Activation of a sworn member's dash-cam video system, if available.
3. Notwithstanding the above, this policy prioritizes the safety of sworn members and the public. Therefore, sworn members are not required to activate a BWC in those circumstances where it is not practicable or safe to do so.
4. Sworn members have no obligation to stop recording or to deactivate a BWC in response to a citizen's request or based solely upon such request or demand. The member should rely on training, experience, and policy to determine the necessity of BWC activation or deactivation.
5. Sworn members shall not be required to record under the following circumstances:
 - a. While engaged in conversations with other agency personnel that involves enforcement tactics or strategy;

- b. To protect medical information, a medical condition, or the privacy of a patient, except when activation is directly related to a necessary law enforcement action (e.g., taking a suspect into custody; interviewing a subject suspected of committing a crime, including but not limited to a DUI; etc.);
- c. When conducting peer support as a peer team member or counselor; or
- d. When the scene of a critical incident is secured. At such time, the immediate supervisor or lead investigator is authorized to direct the placement of the BWC in a secured Department patrol vehicle.

E. Upload, Storage, and Access of BWC Recordings

1. The sworn member issued a BWC System shall upload all corresponding BWC Recordings at the end of his/her shift by utilizing the docking station located at his/her Post/Station or the Wi-Fi Base located in his/her assigned patrol vehicle.
2. A BWC recording generated on a Department BWC System shall be treated as evidence.
3. Copies, links, or public disclosure of BWC Recordings must be authorized for release through the Legal Services Division / Open Records Unit, except as required by supervisors for incident review or requested by the designated prosecutor for related criminal prosecution(s).
4. Any member who tampers or alters BWC Recordings (including tape over, erasure, or other efforts to destroy recorded footage), violates OCGA §16-10-94, or purposefully interferes with proper operations of a BWC System shall be subject to disciplinary action.
5. All BWC recordings shall be retained in accordance with corresponding Georgia retention guidelines.

F. Training

1. Post, Unit, or Station Commanders shall ensure that every sworn member assigned a BWC System receives training in the care and operation of the BWC System prior to use.
2. No member shall use a BWC System unless properly designated by the Department and trained for use.
3. Training of the BWC System must be conducted by the Technology Director or his / her designee as approved by the Commissioner.

G. Reporting BWC Activation

1. All sworn members issued a BWC shall note at the end of the narrative of incident reports if the BWC was activated and recording. The member shall document the serial number of the BWC in the narrative section of the DPS Incident Report (i.e., "This incident was recorded on BWC VXL1-000000").
2. Any sworn member who has activated a BWC during an event in which he/she is not the primary reporting member shall inform the reporting member of the existence of the BWC Recording(s). The reporting member shall record this information in his or her report at the end of the narrative. The notation shall include the recording member's name and badge number.

3. If a member is unable to activate a BWC while participating in a law enforcement response or action, or fails to record the event, incident, or contact with the public for any reason, the member shall document the reason(s) on the incident report.