



Virginia Beach Police Department Body-Worn Camera Project FAQs



1. What is a body worn camera (BWC)?

A camera worn on the officer's uniform that captures audio and video in real time. Most officers will wear their cameras on the chest area.

2. What BWC system did the Virginia Beach Police Department select?

VBPD has adopted the Axon Body 2 camera system. To learn more about the Axon Body 2, [please click here](#).

3. How will this program be implemented throughout the department?

We will implement 450 cameras in 4 phases over the next 24-36 months. The first phase begins in July 2018 with 110 cameras deployed. Cameras will be issued to officers throughout the city to provide equal coverage across the precincts and shifts. Each phase is 6-12 months apart to allow for workload assessments.

4. Why implement the cameras in phases?

This project is more than just adding cameras. It impacts Police, Information Technology and the Commonwealth's Attorney. Implementing in phases allows us to assess workloads for each agency and ensure we are able to meet the demands associated with this program.

5. Does the VBPD have a policy to provide guidance to officers on when to use the body cameras?

Yes. We have spent a great deal of time researching model policies to decide what would be included in our policy. To read VBPD's full policy on body-worn cameras, [please click here](#).

6. Who will wear the body cameras?

Initially, officers in Patrol and select members of the Detective Bureau will wear the cameras. Officer assignments will be regularly reviewed for future assignment.

7. Will officers turn the cameras on for their entire shifts?

No. Officers will have the cameras available for use during their shifts, and will only activate them when conducting official business.

8. Will I know if I am being recorded?

The red light indicator on the cameras will likely be turned off for safety reasons. Officers will advise citizens when encounters are being recorded if it is safe, reasonable and practical to do so. In most cases, it is best to assume that the encounter is being recorded. Citizens may ask the officer if the BWC is recording.

9. Will officers be able to edit, erase or redact their videos?

No. Officers will not be able to edit the video in any way. They will be able to tag (label) the videos after they are recorded for tracking purposes.

10. How long will videos be kept after an encounter is recorded?

Videos will be kept a minimum of 60 days after an encounter. If a video contains information related to a criminal or administrative investigation or is needed for a pending court case, it will be kept as long as needed or as defined by the Virginia Library of Records. Videos that are not needed will be deleted from our system. To read additional information on retention, [please click here](#).

11. Why are officers wearing cameras?

Like other departments across the country, VBPD is implementing body cameras as another tool to gather evidence, provide information about police interactions, increase accountability and strengthen the relationships we have with our community. The footage documents the behavior of officers and citizens during an encounter. It can be used as evidence in court as well as internal investigations. Research on the use of body-worn cameras has shown a reduction in citizen complaints against the police and similar reductions in use of force and assaults on officers.

12. Are there places where officers cannot use the cameras?

Officers will not record public protests or in places where an expectation of privacy exists, such as restrooms, jails, courtrooms, or hospitals, unless the officer is conducting official business and believes the recording will be material to a criminal or administrative investigation.

13. How much does the program cost?

The BWC program initially began as a body camera selection project. City leaders saw an opportunity to upgrade our in-car cameras (dash-cams) and invest in a digital evidence management system. The 5-year plan to implement all technology is expected to cost \$5.5 million dollars.

14. How are the videos stored?

All videos are initially stored in secured cloud servers as part of the BWC contract with Axon, the camera vendor. These servers are compliant with FBI Criminal Justice Information System (CJIS) standards to ensure privacy and security measures are met. If information is determined to be beneficial to an active investigation, we will copy the video to an internal server and hold it for the length of time required by law.

15. What about my privacy during police encounters?

VBPD is aware of the many privacy concerns of those captured in recordings. Our officers will record, per policy, when conducting official business. If a video is to be released to the public, we will redact information that is not pertinent to the specific event. This includes bystanders, juveniles, personal information, and other non-related identifiers such as license plate numbers and addresses. Our priority is to protect your privacy rights and safeguard non-related parties and information.

16. Can I ask the officer to turn off the video camera?

You may request that the officer stop recording, however, officers are required by policy to record an entire encounter when they are conducting official business. We understand there are sensitive issues that may inhibit a person talking with the police. Officers will have discretion to stop recording in these instances.

17. What is the process for obtaining a copy of a BWC video?

The release of any BWC recording to anyone outside of the VBPD shall be approved in advance by the Chief of Police or his designee. BWC recordings shall be released when required by (i) a court order which is final and not subject to appeal, (ii) a subpoena duces tecum which is not subject to a motion to quash, (iii) the rules of discovery when no motion to quash is filed or written objection is made, and (iv) the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, Virginia Code § 2.2-3700 *et seq.*, when not prohibited by law and no exemption is invoked. The Chief of Police may authorize the release of any BWC recording deemed to be in the best interest of the community and public safety.

18. Where can I find out more about Virginia Beach Police Department's BWC program?

We have additional information on our website, [please click here](#).