



CHATHAM COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

SOP # OPS-010

EFFECTIVE DATE: 09/09/20

VIDEO/AUDIO RECORDING EQUIPMENT

REVISION: 02/09/21

PURPOSE

The purpose of this order is to establish a policy regarding the use of Video/Audio Recording (VAR) equipment, personal audio/video devices, and the handling of audio and video media, in general, that is utilized by the Chatham County Police Department (CCPD). All recordings made while acting under the “color of law” as a CCPD employee are the property of the Chatham County Police Department.

POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for the use of video cameras in intoxilyzer testing areas, interview rooms or any other type of audio and video recording systems used by the Chatham County Police personnel while in the performance of their duties.

VAR equipment has been demonstrated to be a valuable tool for officers in the conduct of their duties. VAR equipment is beneficial for documenting criminal activity, documenting evidence, identifying training needs, evaluating officer performance, protecting officers from false allegations of misconduct, deterring officer misconduct and enhancing transparency within the agency and the community.

It is the policy of CCPD that officers using video/audio recording (VAR) equipment shall record audio and video transactions, in their entirety, between the officer and the public as described in this directive and in OPS-067 Body Worn Camera policy. To maximize the utility of this equipment, Officers shall follow the procedures for VAR equipment use as set forth in this directive.

I. PROCEDURES

- A. When audio/video equipment is available, the equipment will be activated to record police calls for service and any other events/incidents wherein officers are interacting and building trust with the public.
 - 1. This would include but is not limited to traffic stops, suspicious person(s) or vehicle contacts, use of force situations, warrant service, activation of emergency equipment, pursuits, arrest, or calls for service.
- B. Once audio/video camera equipment is activated, the camera will not be deactivated until the call or event/incident is concluded.
- C. Once the call or event/incident is concluded, the recording will be terminated.
 - 1. Just prior to deactivation of the VAR, the officer will make a brief audio statement (so that it is audibly recorded by the VAR) explaining the reason for deactivation.

- D. The type of equipment used and the existence of any recordings/photos will be documented in their incident, supplemental, or accident report.
- E. Officers will ensure that the audio is activated whenever the camera is operating. At times it may be appropriate to enable audio recording for evidentiary purposes, although the event/incident is not in the camera view.
- F. Officers will not erase or record over any data, digital or analog video files, photos, or tapes.
- G. Officers will not substitute any tape or recorded video/audio media for another in an attempt to alter, conceal, or hide the events captured on the video/audio media.
- H. Alterations, modifications, or tampering with departmental video/audio equipment by other than authorized persons is strictly prohibited.
- I. All video recordings, digital data recordings, and media issued to or produced from devices owned by the agency are the property of the Chatham County Police Department.
- J. No employee is authorized to disseminate the contents from a department video system or device unless approved by the Chief of Police, County Attorney, or the Chief's designee.

II. BODY WORN CAMERA (BWC)

- A. Employees issued the Body Worn Camera (BWC) systems shall be in compliance with **CCPD Policy GO# OPS-067 Body Worn Camera** when utilizing this equipment.

III. INTERVIEW AND INTERROGATION ROOMS

- A. Prior to using the interview room wherein events are to be recorded, the interviewing detective/officer shall ensure that the video cameras are working properly prior to starting the interview.
- B. The recording shall be transferred to an approved data/digital storage device and labeled with the following information:
 - 1. Interviewing Officer;
 - 2. Case number;
 - 3. Date;
 - 4. Name of the person interviewed.
- C. The data storage device is to be labeled as evidence and submitted to the Property and Evidence Unit as required by CCPD Policy ADM-011, establishing the chain of custody. An additional copy may be made and placed in the case file.

IV. ACCESS AND CONTROL OF CHATHAM COUNTY CAMERA SYSTEMS

- A. Primary access to the Chatham County camera systems will be overseen by the Chatham County ICS Department and can be contacted at (912) 652-7343 or helpdesk@chathamcounty.org
 - 1. Your Unit Commander must initiate the access request; through the CCPD ICS Liaison (Support Services Commander). Once access is granted, the software must be installed on the end user's workstation.
 - 2. Camera system usage must adhere to the following guidelines.
 - a. Only personnel that are actively engaged in the physical security of a building or those granting access to and from a compound or office should have the cameras displayed during their entire shift.

- b. Limit the amount of time accessing the camera system for situations outside of what is listed above or browsing for video retrieval.
 - c. Completely shut down the camera viewing software once your task is completed.
- B. There are two (2) privileges available when accessing the County's camera systems. Both of which require access to be established through the County's ICS Dept. along with authorization from your Unit Commander.
 - 1. Limited Access – With this privilege, you will have access to cameras in a particular area. You can review, export, and save video footage.
 - a. Video history – Allows you to view, at the very least, the last 168 hours. At most, some cameras may have 30 days.
 - 2. Full Access – Grants you the same privileges as the limited access group; however, this group will have access to all cameras in the system.
- C. Officers and Detectives without privileges may contact County ICS Dept. to request them to pull recorded information from the County's camera system. Contact the Chatham County ICS Department with the following information:
 - 1. CRN associated with your request (if any),
 - 2. Date(s) and time(s) to be viewed and recorded,
 - 3. Location (to include direction),
 - 4. And what you are attempting to view. (such as; color, make, model of a vehicle, clothing description, traffic accident, etc.)
- D. Any information recovered with evidentiary value will be saved on a DVD or another digital storage device and submitted as evidence, as outlined in policy ADM-011 Property and Evidence.

V. USE OF PERSONALLY OWNED DEVICES

- A. Employees should not use their personally owned audio, video, or digital recording devices in a work-related capacity.
- B. Employees who encounter incidents that do not allow for the timely use of CCPD recording devices may use individually-owned recording devices. Employees shall adhere to this policy's requirements and CCPD policy OPS-067 Body Worn Camera when using their devices.
 - 1. Employees using their personally owned devices in a work-related capacity may subject that device and/or its contents to being subpoenaed or to an open recorders request.
 - 2. Employees will notify their supervisors if they utilized their recording device and will produce the device upon request of a supervisor.
- C. All recordings/photos made while working in any capacity as a Chatham County Police Department employee are considered the property of CCPD. The devices used are subject to inspection/review by this department.
- D. Unless authorized by the Chief of Police or designee, employees will not record other employees who are performing administrative or non-enforcement activities/actions without their knowledge.
 - 1. Examples of such administrative or non-enforcement activities/actions include, but are not limited to:

- a. Meetings (strategy, tactics, etc.), supervisor directives, disciplinary actions, or topics of a confidential nature are discussed.
- 2. Any violation of this section of the policy will result in disciplinary action, as directed by the Chief of Police or designee.
- E. Officers utilizing audio/video recording devices will not activate or otherwise use the device to record activities in the courthouse or courtrooms without the express permission of the presiding Judge or authorized court personnel.
 - 1. If mounted or openly displayed, the audio recording device shall be removed from the mount, so it is apparent the device is not in use.
- F. All employees should assume that all enforcement activities and actions are being recorded.
- G. Whenever an incident is captured, and the recording has evidentiary value, or when an arrest has been recorded, employees will download all audio and/or video recordings by the end of their tour of duty.
 - 1. The records will be downloaded to a data/digital storage device, which includes one of the following.
 - a. CD/DVD,
 - b. Thumb/Jump Drive,
 - c. External Hard Drive or,
 - d. Other approved storage devices and/or storage locations.
- H. When an incident or arrest is captured on a personal device, the employee will indicate the use of their equipment in their incident, accident, or supplemental reports.
 - 1. The report shall also include which data/digital storage device the information was downloaded to and where the recording is being stored:
 - a. Property & Evidence Room
 - b. Precinct/Unit/etc... (secure location)
 - 2. Photos may be e-mailed to the Forensic Unit to be uploaded to the department approved storage location. When e-mailing photos, you must include the CRN.
- I. Audio and/or digital recordings of evidentiary value shall be downloaded onto a DVD-R (or other approved data/digital storage device) and submitted as evidence (in accordance with GO# ADM-011 Property and Evidence.
- J. Downloaded incidents not needed as evidence or other official CCPD business may be erased after one (1) year from the date of the recording.
 - 1. Any video recording showing an arrest must be retained for a period of five (5) years, in accordance with Georgia Records Retention Schedule.

VI. OTHER DEVICES

- A. Other devices shall include those devices that are owned by Chatham County or not personally owned by an employee. Examples of such devices are cell phones, smartphones, laptops, or any other device capable of making audio/video recordings.
- B. The guidelines that are outlined in section V of this policy shall apply to this section.

VII. CITIZEN REVIEW OF VIDEO/AUDIO RECORDINGS

- A. Any portion of a video/audio which records an event resulting in a citizen complaint against an officer may be reviewed by the person alleged to have been aggrieved by the officer's actions. This review may require prior approval if there is an ongoing investigation.
- B. Any video/audio which depicts a discharge of a firearm by an Officer or serious injury or death of any person shall not be shown to a complainant without prior approval of the Chief of Police or designee.
- C. Upon being informed of the complaint, the Officer's supervisor shall review the recording to determine if any apparent violation(s) of CCPD policies or procedures has occurred.
- D. If the supervisor determines that such violation(s) may have occurred, the supervisor shall initiate an investigation of the incident in accordance with CCPD policies and procedures.
- E. If the supervisor determines that no such violation(s) occurred, the supervisor shall document the complaint and a summary of actions taken.
- F. All other requests for reviewing or copying video/audio recordings must be in accordance with Georgia Law and CCPD policy concerning Open/Public Records.

BY ORDER OF:

Electronically Signed in PowerDMS on 02/09/2021

Jeffrey M. Hadley
Chief of Police