

	FREDERICKSBURG POLICE DEPARTMENT DIRECTIVES	
	OPERATIONS	
306.00	APPROVED: Brian F. Layton, Chief of Police	Initiated: 04/11/2014
		Revised: 1/23/2025 Reviewed: 03/28/2025

AXON VIDEO/AUDIO RECORDING SYSTEM

306.00 – Policy – The Fredericksburg Police Department has established standards and guidelines related to the capture and use of audio and video recordings via the Axon video and audio recording system. This system will be used to document events and capture data to be preserved in a web-based digital storage facility at Evidence.com. Once recorded, these recordings cannot be altered in any way and are protected with multiple layers of encryption. [41.3.8 a]

306.01 – Definitions

Audio Recording -- Electronic recording of conversation or other spoken words.

Axon – A camera system incorporating an audio and video recording device. The camera consists of a single camera lens and functioning buttons to begin and end an audio/video recording. The camera is worn on an Officer to record events during their shift. This device shows status lights that reflect the camera's current operating mode. This device is equipped with a power button, volume button, LCD screen which displays battery life and recording status, four microphones, and a port for cable connection. **The device must be switched ON for any operations to occur.**

Buffering Mode -- The Axon continuously loops video recording for 30 seconds. It records only video in buffering mode.

Chest-mounted Camera - The audio and color video camera mounted on a bracket fitted to the Officers uniform shirt, ballistic vest, or outermost article of clothing.

Record Mode -- The Record button, when pressed twice in quick succession, will begin a recording and place the Axon in Record Mode. The Record button must be held for 5 second to end a recording. In the Record Mode, the Axon saves the buffered video and continues recording audio and video until the Record button is held to end the recording. Once a recording has been initiated, the Axon will emit 2 audible beeps, and continue to do so every 2 minutes, that provide a reminder that the device is still recording.

Evidence.com -- An online, web-based digital media storage facility that stores digitally encrypted data (photographs, audio and video recordings) in a highly secure environment. The recordings are accessible to authorized personnel based upon a security clearance.

Evidence Transfer Manager (ETM) -- A docking station that simultaneously recharges the Axon (system) and uploads all data captured during the shift to Evidence.com. The ETM ensures that evidence handling is secure and not altered.

Recording Mode -- The Axon will continuously record audio and video until the recording operating is ended by the Officer.

Video Recording -- Electronic recording of visual images with or without audio.

306.02 – General Guidelines – Department personnel utilizing video and audio systems will adhere to the procedures outlined within this policy. The use of video and audio recording will be for the purpose of recording evidentiary data to assist in the enforcement and prosecution of federal, state, and local statutes. It will also be used to provide an accurate record of an incident for investigative purposes, risk management, civil liability defense, and enhancement of Officer safety.

306.03 – Procedures -- Only those Officers who have completed approved training will be allowed to operate the Axon system. The Axon is the only body worn camera system approved for use by the Fredericksburg Police Department. Training will be conducted by the Axon BWC Administrator or their designee during post-academy training or during the FTEP if already certified. Supervisors will receive additional training on how to utilize the Axon BWC for administrative needs from their Division Commander or their designee as soon as practical. [41.3.8 f]

Officers will inspect the Axon system for any physical damage and to ensure the device is in working order at the beginning of their shift. Any problems, damage, or loss of equipment will be reported immediately to the Officer's supervisor and the Body Worn Camera Administrator(s) (Administrator notification should be made by departmental email). [41.3.8 e]

(Officers may sign out one of the spare Axon cameras located in the Patrol Division Suite if needed. If a spare Axon system is used, Officers must notify the Department's Body Worn Camera Administrator(s) via departmental email, which should include the camera number, date(s), and times of use).

Officers will wear the Axon camera utilizing one of the provided mounting options (magnet or clip) overtop of the outermost article of clothing. When an Officer is participating in any activity where a

ballistic vest is mandatory, Officers will wear the Axon camera high on the support side of the chest (opposite side of weapon hand) in order to allow freedom of the weapon hand.

It is the responsibility of the Officer to ensure the Axon camera's view is not obstructed.

For security reasons the Axon system shall not be worn into the Circuit Court or General District Court or a jail facility without the approval of the on-duty supervisor of the jail facility or courthouse. Officers are permitted to wear the Axon Camera inside Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court but the camera needs to be in the "off" mode.

Officers/detectives shall activate the Axon system in any situation where an enforcement action is being taken by the Officer/Detective, or when the Officer/Detective is conducting an investigation into a possible crime. This includes traffic stops; suspect stops; vehicle searches; interviews of suspects or witnesses; confrontational citizen contacts; and use of force situations. **Officers/Detectives may exercise discretion with camera activation when interviewing victims.** (Note: This applies to all Officers present on the scene, not just the primary Officer).

Officers shall begin recording as soon as practical during a given situation and continue to record until they clear the call and are back in service or a supervisor has authorized (on camera) that a recording may cease. Officers shall document in all reports if they fail to record an activity that is required by this policy and why.

Once the situation stabilizes, if it is necessary to discuss issues or concerns in private with another Officer, a supervisor, or another entity such as the Commonwealth's Attorney's Office, (the Axon may be temporarily deactivated and reactivated once private discussion or concerns have ceased.)

(The report number will automatically be assigned to all video recordings unless a recording is not related to a report or incident logged through CAD/RMS. In the event that auto tagging of report numbers is down it will be the officers responsibility to tag any evidentiary videos with the respective report number. Notification will be sent out to the agency by the Axon BWC Administrator via department email if the auto tagging feature is down.

The Axon will not be intentionally activated to record conversations of fellow employees without their knowledge during routine, non-enforcement related activities unless such recording is required by a court order or is authorized by the Chief of Police or designee as part of an administrative investigation.

The Officer can also begin a recording with the Axon BWC automatically by activating the forward-facing emergency lighting in a Patrol vehicle. The recording will continue until the Axon camera is manually turned off. [41.3.8 b]

306.04 – Media Storage for the Axon BWC – At the end of their shift, and or following the use of an Axon camera, Officers shall place the Axon camera into the Evidence Transfer Machine (docking station) for charging and uploading of media.

The Axon BWC should not be removed from the ETM (docking station) until the data has been uploaded. If a situation arises that requires the Officer to remove the Axon camera, it is okay to do so. Once the Axon camera is placed back into the ETM, the data upload will resume.

The media captured via the Axon BWC will only be uploaded to Evidence.com and used for official purposes only.

Officers may use media captured, directly from the Axon camera or Evidence.com, to assist with the investigation and complete reports. [41.3.10, a]

Media captured via the Axon BWC will be accessed through www.evidence.com.

All recordings are the property of the Fredericksburg Police Department. No video or audio recordings will be stored, displayed, or shared on any social media page or platform without the authorization of the Chief of Police or his designee.

The following categories apply to all Axon videos uploaded to Evidence.com:

- **Uncategorized** – (Recordings that do not pertain to a call for service or a report will upload using this category.) The recordings will automatically delete after 180 days.
- **Evidence** – Used to store recordings that will be used as evidence. All recordings that pertain to a call for service or a report will automatically use this category. The recordings will automatically delete after 365 days. **If Axon camera footage is needed for a court case that will extend beyond 180 days, it is the responsibility of the case Officer/Detective to place the recording onto a DVD and store the necessary footage as physical evidence.**
- **Junk** – These are recordings made during training with the system or any other recording that is of no value (i.e.: Officer turned camera on then back off immediately). These recordings will automatically delete after 180 days.
- **Training** – These recordings will be used for training purposes. Recordings categorized as training will remain in evidence.com until manually deleted.
- **Use of Force** – Used to mark recordings where force was used by an officer. These recording are held indefinitely. [41.3.8 d]

Axon recordings are automatically categorized as evidence when a report number is associated with the recording, which is assigned automatically by the CAD system. If an officer records something that is not derived from a call for service where a report number is attached to the call and the recording is needed. The case officer must go into evidence.com and label the recording appropriately for retention purposes.

Officers will not make copies of any video or audio recording for personal use and are prohibited from using a recording device, such as a telephone camera or secondary video camera, to record media from Evidence.com.

A system administrator will be designated by the Chief of Police for the Axon System. The administrator will be responsible for the following actions:

- Ensuring removal of data as required
- Training of personnel on the Axon
- Troubleshooting any Axon issues
- Maintaining Axon equipment inventory
- Retrieving and redacting Axon video when necessary
- Ensuring the issuance of necessary Axon equipment to Officers

306.05 – Review of Axon Media – Digital recordings shall be randomly reviewed by supervisors to monitor Officer performance, training, critique, early intervention inquiries, civil claims or administrative inquiry.

- Supervisors will document at least one area of observation per month obtained from the Axon Video on the Axon Video Review Form for each Officer assigned to him/her. [41.3.10, e]
- The documented reviews will be saved on the Allpd drive in a folder labeled “Axon Video Reviews”. This folder will be limited to supervisory access.

An investigator who is designated by the Chief of Police into the investigation of a personnel complaint, claims investigation, administrative inquiry or criminal investigation may review specific incidents contained on digital recordings. [41.3.8 g] [41.3.10 d]

Officers will be permitted to review any video footage of an incident in which they are involved prior to making a statement about the incident. Under certain circumstances, such as the use of deadly force or a serious allegation of misconduct, the department reserves the right to limit or restrict the Officers viewing of the video file. [41.3.10 b]

Under no circumstances shall any digital recording be used or shown for the purpose of Officer ridicule or embarrassment. Officers can only view videos they have recorded with their Axon system. Officers have the ability to share recorded videos with other Officers and supervisors have the ability to reassign videos as needed. [41.3.10 c]

All requests for video involving criminal cases will be forwarded to the Commonwealth’s Attorney’s office for review. All requests for video that involve an administrative investigation will not be considered for release until such investigation is completed. All other requests for audio/video will be forwarded to the Detective Division Commander for follow up. The Detective Division Commander will ensure all FOIA requests are handled in accordance with applicable laws. [41.3.8 c]

An annual administrative review memo will be completed in May of each year by the Deputy Chief. The review will then be forwarded to the Accreditation Manager [41.3.10 f]