



Seattle Police Department Policy Manual



16.090 – In-Car and Body-Worn Video

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This policy section applies to all on-duty sworn employees who operate In-Car Video (ICV) or Body-Worn Video (BWV) systems. The goal of these systems is to enhance public trust in the Seattle Police Department by providing greater transparency into sworn employee actions. Recording law enforcement interactions between sworn employees and members of the public provides valuable information for sworn employee accountability and effective criminal investigations.

The department will continually review both in-car and body-worn video programs, including this manual section and related training, considering changes in best practices, technology, and legal standards.

16.090-POL-1 Recording with ICV and BWV

1. The Department Assigns BWV Cameras and Installs Chargers

Each precinct will position BWV camera docks in a way that allows sworn employees to access their equipment.

The department will assign BWV cameras to sworn employees individually. Sworn employees may not wear any personally owned camera device. The department only authorizes those camera units issued by SPD.

2. Sworn Employees Who Have Been Trained and Have Been Issued BWV Equipment Must Carry It During Their Shift

Before sworn employees deploy with an ICV-equipped vehicle or BWV camera, they will complete department training on the proper use of the equipment and procedures for uploading recorded video. This training will include:

- System preparation and operation.
- Department policy on camera usage.
- Pointing of the ICV camera and placement of the BWV camera.

As public and sworn employee safety considerations permit, sworn employees will make reasonable efforts to position the vehicle and camera to obtain useful

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recordings and capture critical evidence. Sworn employees will not position vehicles to avoid recording an event.

Sworn employees will wear the BWV camera on the upper torso.

Once sworn employees have completed ICV/BWV training and have been issued the equipment, sworn employees will deploy for their assignments with BWV cameras. When required to record an event, both ICV and BWV will be used.

Exception: SPMA members will deploy with BWV in a manner consistent with the existing labor agreements.

3. All Sworn Employees Operating ICV and/or BWV Will Be In Uniform

Field Training Officers in plainclothes do not need to wear a BWV camera.

4. Sworn Employees Assigned to Federal/Multi-Agency Task Forces

Sworn employees assigned to Federal/Multi-Agency Task Forces will wear and operate body worn cameras, if it is safe and feasible to do so, during the following:

- When engaged in a planned attempt to serve an arrest warrant, execute a search or seizure warrant or order, or engage in another planned arrest.
- If they take law enforcement action while wearing a body camera.
- When doing so does not compromise the safety of law enforcement personnel or other persons.

If body worn video is not worn and/or not activated, sworn employees must document the reason why.

If working an assignment with an associated SPD report number, the sworn employee will complete a supplemental report in Mark 43. If working an assignment with no associated SPD report, the sworn employee will complete a memo and submit it to their SPD chain of command for review and retention.

(See also [RCW 9.73.090\(1\)\(c\)](#))

5. Sworn Employees Address and Note System Malfunctions

At the start of the shift, sworn employees will prepare ICV and BWV systems as outlined in the training and 16.090-TSK-1.

Both officers in two-officer cars will log into the ICV system.

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If an employee discovers an operational issue with ICV or BWV at any time during the shift, the employee will contact Seattle ITD for troubleshooting (if applicable), note the issue in a CAD update, and notify a supervisor as soon as practicable.

6. Sworn Employees Will Document the Existence of Video or Reason for Lack of Video

Sworn employees will document the existence or absence of any BWV and/or ICV video in any related paperwork. (e.g., Reports, Supplements, Field Contacts, NOI, Criminal Citation, TCR, etc.)

When sworn employees are aware that there is no recording or there was a delay in recording, sworn employees will explain why in the submitted paperwork. When sworn employees are not submitting any paperwork, they will enter a CAD update with this explanation.

Employees not logged to a call or event, but who knowingly capture video of the event, will log to the call, and note in a CAD updated that the event was recorded.

7. Sworn Employees Will Initiate Upload of Recorded Video and Recharging of Equipment Before Going Out of Service

Before going out of service, sworn employees will dock their BWV cameras to initiate upload of BWV video and recharging. If the video upload process is not initiated before the end of shift, sworn employees will notify a supervisor.

Exception: Sworn employees assigned take home vehicles will upload their ICV (if equipped) and BWV by the end of their next scheduled work shift.

8. Specialized Units May Request Exceptions

The department recognizes that in relatively rare circumstances units may perform specific tasks during their normal duties that make using the ICV or BWV impractical. Units may request exceptions to recording with ICV and/or BWV, for those specific tasks, from the Chief of Police. Any exceptions granted are valid for a term not to exceed one year and may be renewed annually at the discretion of the Chief of Police by a showing of good cause.

Units will request the exceptions by department memorandum outlining the specific tasks and good cause justification. All approvals will be in writing and signed and dated expressly by the Chief of Police. The Chief of Police and affected section commanders will maintain a file of approved exceptions. Section commanders will provide a copy to the Office of Police Accountability and may provide copies of the exceptions to the affected personnel under their command.

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16.090-POL-2 Sworn Employees Recording Police Activity

1. Notification of Recording

Sworn employees will notify persons that they are being recorded as soon as practical, and the notification will be on the recording. Sworn employees will make reasonable efforts to communicate to non-English speakers, those with limited English proficiency, deaf persons, or persons hard of hearing that they are being recorded.

Sworn employees will make reasonable efforts to repeat the notification, if practical, for additional people that become involved in the recording.

Consistent with [RCW 9.73.090\(1\)\(b\)](#), sworn employees will again notify persons placed under arrest they are being recorded and verbally give Miranda warnings on the recording.

- Sworn employees must read Miranda warnings to arrestees when recording an interrogation. As an example, when BWV is activated in the holding cell area for an interrogation, sworn employees will read Miranda again.

2. When Sworn Employees Record Activity

When safe and practical, sworn employees will record the following police activity, even if the event is out of view of the camera:

- Dispatched calls, starting before the employee arrives on the call to ensure adequate time to turn on cameras
- Traffic and Terry stops
- On-view infractions and criminal activity
- Arrests and seizures
- Supervisor arrest screenings and interviews of arrestees
- Searches and inventories of vehicles, persons, or premises
- Handling and counting of currency up to the point it is sealed in a currency envelope or air-dry bag (see manual section [7.080 – Money Evidence](#))
- Transports (excluding ride-a-longs and passengers for meetings)
- Following or riding in ambulances or medic units that are transporting persons involved in an event to a medical facility
- Vehicle eluding/pursuits

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- Questioning victims, suspects, or witnesses (this does not include conversations with persons merely wishing to pass on information about general criminal activity not tied to a specific event)

If circumstances prevent recording at the start of an event, the employee will record as soon as practical.

Sworn employees will record the entire event to its conclusion unless specifically instructed otherwise by this manual section.

If the sworn employee is on a perimeter post at an extended major incident investigation, the on-scene supervisor, or FIT commander where FIT has been notified and is responding, may authorize ICV and BWV recording to be stopped when he or she reasonably believes further recording will not capture audio/visual evidence regarding the incident or enforcement efforts.

Sworn employees may briefly stop BWV (not ICV) during an event to view video that would assist in an investigation.

- Sworn employees will restart recording with BWV as soon as feasible after gathering the desired information.

3. Recording in Sensitive Areas

Sworn employees will not record in restrooms, jails and the interiors of medical, mental health, counseling, or therapeutic facilities unless for a direct law enforcement purpose.

Examples of law enforcement purposes include:

- Conducting an interview with a suspect or victim
- Crime(s) in progress
- Taking resistant arrestees into custody
- Ongoing or impending use(s) of force
- Recording an allegation of misconduct
- Supervisor interviews of arrestees for use of force investigations and arrest screenings

Note: Sworn employees will record in the interiors of ambulances or medic units.

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4. Recording in Residences and Private Areas

Sworn employees will ask for consent to record with BWV in residences or other private areas not open to the public unless there is a crime in progress, or other circumstances exist that would allow the sworn employee to be lawfully present without a warrant. The request and any response will be recorded.

If any person with legal standing denies permission to record, sworn employees will stop recording with BWV while they are in the private area.

5. Protecting Privacy and Dignity

There may be limited circumstances when the respect for an individual's privacy or dignity outweighs the need to record an event.

Such circumstances may include natural death scenes, death notifications, child interviews, cultural or religious objections to being recorded, and when the use of BWV would impede or limit the cooperation of a victim or witness.

When an employee believes such circumstances exist, the employee may deactivate the BWV.

In exceptional circumstances video inadvertently recorded in sensitive areas or situations will be flagged and forwarded to the Legal Unit for review. The Legal Unit may then approve deletion of the relevant section of video by the Video Unit.

6. Discretion in Recording

Sworn employees reasonably exercising discretion under department policy, for the above sections, Recording in Sensitive Areas, Recording in Residences and Private Areas, and Protecting Privacy and Dignity, will not be subject to discipline for the decision to record or not record those portions of an event.

Unless otherwise prohibited by this policy, sworn employees may initiate recording any time they determine it would be beneficial to capture an event or activity.

BWV may be used to record interviews related to a use of force investigation covered under manual section [8.400 - Use of Force Reporting and Investigation Interim Policy](#).

7. Recording Demonstrations

Sworn employees who have been issued BWV cameras and who have been assigned to work demonstrations will record with body-worn video activated during demonstrations when they are facing and/or in contact with the public.

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8. Sworn Employees Stating the Reasons for Stopping BWV

Sworn employees who stop recording during an event will state on the recording their intention to stop recording and explain the basis for that decision. Sworn employees will also document the reason(s) in the report and/or CAD update.

Supervisors who direct that recordings cease will direct sworn employees to document the order in the report and/or CAD update.

9. Determining the Conclusion of an Event

An event has concluded when both of the following apply:

- The sworn employee has completed his or her part of the active investigation; and
- There is little possibility that the sworn employee will have further contact with any person involved in the event

For transports to a King County jail facility, the event concludes just before the sworn employee enters the sally port of the facility.

For transports to medical facilities, the event concludes when the sworn employee reaches the transport destination, and the sworn employee is exiting the vehicle.

For transports to other locations, the event concludes when the sworn employee reaches the transport destination, and the subject has been taken into the destination.

16.090-POL-3 Reviewing Department Video

This policy applies to all employees who review ICV and BWV recordings.

1. All ICV and BWV Recordings and Related Data are the Property of the Seattle Police Department

Department policy governs all access, review, and release of in-car and body-worn video.

SPD manual section [12.080 – Disclosure of Department Records](#) addresses video retention periods and release of video to the public, including persons wishing to file misconduct complaints.

Employees will not make copies of videos, by any means, for personal use.

2. Employees Will Not Tamper With, Alter, or Delete Video

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Exception: This does not apply to personnel tasked with system maintenance who purge videos under established retention guidelines.

3. Employees May Review Recorded Video

Sworn employees may review their own recorded video except in instances of FIT investigations. The FIT manual outlines when sworn employees may view video in those cases.

The department, including supervisors, OPA, Training, Audit, and investigatory personnel may view ICV and BWV recordings for these purposes:

- Complaint
- Criminal investigation
- Officer-involved collision
- Vehicle pursuit investigation or review
- Public disclosure request
- Use of force review or investigation (See FIT Manual if applicable)
- Performance appraisal
- As part of the Early Intervention System (EIS)
- Training purposes, with the permission of the involved employees
- Audit and Quality Control/Troubleshooting

4. Minor Misconduct Discovered During ICV and BWV Review Will Not Result in Discipline

If, while viewing in-car or body-worn video, minor acts of misconduct unrelated to the original reason for viewing the video are discovered, they will not result in discipline or a sustained finding.

However, such acts may result in a training referral, or counseling, mentoring, or coaching and may be included in an employee's performance evaluation.

In the context of in-car and/or body-worn video review, acts of misconduct that do not rise to the level of serious policy violations as defined in manual section [5.002 – Responsibilities of Employees Concerning Alleged Policy Violations](#) will be handled pursuant to that manual section.

5. Users Will Note the Purpose for Viewing Video

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Any employee viewing a video after it has been uploaded will manually make an entry in the viewer application at the beginning of the viewing session stating the purpose for viewing the video.

Employees will refer members of the public who wish to view video to file a public disclosure request.

16.090-TSK-1 Preparing the In-Car and Body-Worn Video Systems

When deploying with body-worn video (BWV) or a vehicle equipped with an in-car video (ICV) system, an **employee**:

1. **Opens** the Axon View XL application, and **signs-in** at the start of their shift, unless exigent circumstances prevent sign on.
2. **Verifies** that all indicators show that BWV camera is fully charged.
3. **Positions** cameras correctly.
4. If the system malfunctions, **troubleshoots** using steps included in the initial training such as system reboot, or re-synching of cameras.
5. If the initial troubleshooting does not fix the problem, **contacts** the IT Section, and follows their instructions.
6. If the problem is resolved, **makes** an entry in the MDC log of the malfunction and steps taken to resolve it.
7. If the problem is not resolved, **notifies** supervisor of the malfunction (see 16.090-TSK-2).

16.090-TSK-2 Supervisor Responding to a Malfunction of ICV or BWV

After receiving a report that an ICV system or BWV camera has malfunctioned, a **supervisor**:

1. For BWV, **arranges** for the sworn employee to get a replacement BWV camera, if one is available.
2. For ICV, **assigns** the sworn employee(s) to visit Seattle ITD, or switches the sworn employee(s) to a vehicle with a functioning ICV system if one is available.

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3. **Approves** the employee working without use of ICV and/or BWV if there are no vehicles with a functioning ICV system or spare body cameras available.
4. **Flags** the vehicle with the malfunctioning ICV system as “out-of-service”.
5. **Requests** repair of the malfunctioning system by Seattle ITD.