



# **POLICY AND PROCEDURE NO. 441**

## **Video Security**

Date Issued: March 22, 2021

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4 Pages

### **PURPOSE**

The Worcester Police Department utilizes video security as a public safety, emergency response and crime prevention tool. The Worcester Police Department is committed to enhancing the quality of life of the community by integrating the best practices of technology use for safety and security. A critical component of a comprehensive security plan is the utilization of video security systems.

This policy balances the use of video security to assist in protecting the safety and security of the community with the preservation of individual privacy, freedom of expression and civil liberties. To ensure the protection of individual privacy rights in accordance with local, state and federal laws, this policy is adopted to formalize procedures for the installation of video security equipment and the handling, viewing, retention, dissemination, and destruction of video security records. The purpose of this policy is to regulate the use of video security systems used to observe and record public areas of the city in a manner consistent with the accepted rights of privacy. Although video will be recorded, this policy does not imply or guarantee that the video security system will be monitored constantly in real time.

### **POLICY**

The Real Time Crime Center (RTCC) has the responsibility and authority to select, coordinate, operate, manage, and monitor authorized video security systems pursuant to this policy. All divisions are responsible for complying with this policy within their respective operations.

Video security systems that predate the effective date of this policy shall be brought into compliance with this policy within six (6) months of the effective date of this policy. Unapproved or nonconforming video security systems may be removed.

Information obtained from the video security system shall be used primarily for law enforcement and investigative purposes. Information will be handled with an appropriate level of security to safeguard against violations of an individual's right to privacy, unauthorized access, alteration, or disclosure.

Personnel are prohibited from using or disseminating information acquired from the city's video security system, except for official purposes. All information obtained and/or observations made via the use of the video security system are considered confidential and can only be used for official city and law enforcement purposes upon approval from the Chief of Police or designee. Requests to use or disseminate video security images for non-law enforcement purposes shall be decided by the Office of the Chief of Police or designee. Those intending to use such video will seek consultation and advice from the General Counsel related to these requests prior to the release of records.

Mobile or hidden video security equipment may be used in criminal investigations by authorized personnel only. Covert video security equipment may also be used for non-criminal investigations into specific instances that may pose a significant threat to public safety, security and property as authorized by the Office of the Chief of Police or designee.

Use of any motion or still image monitoring or recording with personal devices such as phones or personal cameras in areas where there is a reasonable expectation of privacy shall follow the same standards of ethical use and governance as detailed in this policy.

Any access to or use of recorded video in violation of this policy may result in legal and/or significant disciplinary action, up to and including discharge.

## **SCOPE**

This policy applies to all areas, departments and personnel of Worcester Police Department when installing and utilizing video security systems within the city.

Video security may be installed in situations and places where the security and safety of either property or persons would be enhanced.

Where appropriate, video security may be used inside and/or outside of city facilities.

Video security is designed for the protection of people and property, and the primary objective is to capture video and store it on a remote device. The video system supports public safety via:

**Deterrence:** The presence of video security equipment and the likelihood of apprehension based on the use of video security can dissuade a potential perpetrator from attempting a crime.

**Response:** When an incident is reported, an operator can use the video security system to view the location and assess the situation before responders arrive. Video may also be used to observe and document the activities of responders, including use of mobile camera devices carried by an officer and/or attached to their vehicle.

**Investigations:** After a crime has been committed, recorded video may reveal images pertinent to the investigation of the crime. These images may be immediately shared with law enforcement personnel in the field, assisting with the rapid identification of suspects and/or the recovery of valuable property.

**Situational Awareness:** The ability to monitor real-time video can lead to the detection of developing situations that may become a threat to the community's safety and security.

This policy does not apply to video recording or monitoring used for operational purposes, academic purposes, media purposes or recording of public performances, events, or interviews provided that such activity is disclosed or readily apparent to those in view of the camera. An example of such excluded activities would include the audio/video recording of investigatory interviews.

## **RESPONSIBILITY**

The Office of the Chief of Police or designee is responsible for the implementation and review of this policy.

The Office of the Chief of Police or designee is responsible for determining the appropriate application of video security technologies of the Police Departments' throughout the city.

The Office of the Chief of Police or designee shall monitor developments in the law, security industry practices, and technology to ensure that the application of video security is consistent with best practices and complies with all relevant federal and state regulations.

The Office of the Chief of Police or designee will review all written requests for video security equipment installations and removal. The Office of the Chief of Police or designee will review specific camera locations to determine that the perimeter of view of fixed location cameras conforms to this policy. When requested the installation and removal of video security cameras by other City departments may be reviewed by the Office of the Chief of Police or designee, in accordance with the procedure detailed in Section 4 of this document.

On an annual basis RTCC will provide The Office of the Chief of Police a summary of policy compliance; implementation progress; any petitions, appeals or complaints raised by community members or departments; dissemination of recorded video or still images outside the WPD; and measurable results of video installations.

## **ACCESS & MONITORING**

All video security recording and/or monitoring of activities of individuals or groups will be conducted in a manner consistent with WPD policies and all applicable state and federal laws.

Video security recording and/or monitoring will not be based on the subjects' race, color, national or ethnic origin, age, religion, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, veteran status, or any other characteristic protected under applicable federal or state law.

All video security recording and/or monitoring will be conducted in a professional, ethical, and legal manner.

Video security cameras are not monitored continuously under normal operating conditions but may be monitored for legitimate safety and security purposes that include, but are not limited to: in response to an incident, special events, and specific investigations authorized by the Office of the Chief of Police or designee.

For property protection and personal safety (see Section 1- Scope), access to live video or recorded video from video security cameras shall be limited to persons authorized by the Office of the Chief of Police or designee.

## **REVIEW OF RECORDINGS**

WPD command staff, including the Office of the Chief of Police or designee may play back recorded video while conducting an official investigation. Other than WPD command staff, the Office of the Chief of Police or designee, are the only staff authorized to play back recorded video when searching for evidence of a recently reported incident.

The Office of the Chief of Police or designee may authorize sworn law enforcement personnel from other agencies to review recorded video in the course of an official investigation. All other personnel outside of WPD must be expressly authorized to review video by the Office of the Chief of Police or designee.

State or municipal law enforcement agencies that use video security may request live access to WPD cameras that have views of public streets or properties. Requests for access shall be reviewed by the Office of the Chief of Police or designee, in granting any such request, the government agency must adhere to rules of use consistent with the WPD policy on use of video.

No recorded video is to be downloaded to a portable storage device or sent via email except by a member of the WPD command staff, and/or sworn officers in the course of an official investigation in order to preserve the recorded video as evidence. In such cases, the procedures for handling evidence shall apply. Further, all instances of video downloads or sending video by email will be recorded in a video download log maintained by RTCC.

Nothing in this section is intended to limit the authority of WPD in conducting law enforcement investigations and other related activities.

## **OPERATION**

Operation of video security systems will be conducted in a manner consistent with all existing WPD policies.

Video security system operators shall:

Monitor systems based on suspicious behavior, not individual characteristics.

Not view private rooms or other areas through windows

Not continuously view people becoming intimate in public areas.

## **TRAINING**

A. Video security system operators shall be trained in the technical, legal, and ethical parameters of appropriate video use.

B. Video security system operators shall receive a copy of this policy and provide documented acknowledgement that they have read and understood its contents.

## **STORAGE & RETENTION**

A. No attempt shall be made to alter any part of any original video security recording. RTCC systems will be configured to prevent camera operators from tampering with recorded information. Exceptions may be made in the course of preparing video for court purposes where length/time would be unreasonable. While editing for time/length and continuity shall be permitted for court purposes an original of the full length video shall be kept by a member of the WPD command staff, and or sworn officer or investigator.

B. All video security records shall be stored in a secure WPD location for a period not exceeding 30 days and will then promptly be erased or written over, unless retained as part of a criminal investigation or court proceedings (criminal or civil), or other approved use as designated by the Office of the Chief of Police or designee.

Per:

*Steven M. Sargent*

Chief of Police