

Body-Worn Cameras

423.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines for the use of a body-worn camera (BWC) by members of this department and for the access, use, and retention of department BWC media (50 ILCS 706/10-20).

The provisions of this policy, including notice, documentation, access, and retention, also apply to other portable audio/video recording devices used by members, where applicable.

This policy does not apply to undercover operations, wiretaps, or eavesdropping (concealed listening devices).

423.1.1 DEFINITIONS

Definitions related to this policy include (50 ILCS 706/10-10; 50 ILCS 706/10-20):

Activate - To place a BWC in active mode (also called event mode). In active mode, the BWC records both video and audio.

BWC media - The video, audio, and images captured by department BWCs and the associated metadata.

BWC media systems - Any software, including web-based programs and mobile applications, authorized by ILETSB and used by the Department to upload/download, store, view, transfer, and otherwise maintain BWC media.

Deactivate - To place a BWC in buffering mode (also called ready or pre-event mode). In buffering mode, the BWC records video (without audio) in short, predetermined intervals of at least 30 seconds that are retained only temporarily. However, when a BWC is activated, the interval recorded immediately prior to activation is then stored as part of the BWC media. Deactivate does not mean powering off the BWC.

Event - A general term referring to a set of circumstances that may, but does not necessarily, correlate directly to a single public safety incident.

Law enforcement-related encounters or activities - Activities in which the member is enforcing the law, including traffic or pedestrian stops, arrests, searches, interrogations, investigations, pursuits, crowd, and traffic control. It does not include tasks unrelated to the investigation of a crime such as participating in town halls or other community outreach; helping a child find the child's parents; providing death notifications; performing in-home or hospital well-being checks on the sick, elderly, or persons presumed missing; or completing paperwork while alone, participating in training in a classroom setting, or tasks performed only in the presence of another law enforcement officer.

Sleep Mode - Sleep mode instantly disables the body worn camera's buffering mode and prevents signals from activating the camera's recording. While it is quicker than powering the camera on and off and also helps conserve battery life, this feature should only be used when the officer needs

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momentary privacy (i.e., in the restroom or a short personal break). Otherwise, the expectation is for officers to have their camera buffering at all times.

423.2 POLICY

It is the policy of the Department to use BWCs and BWC media for evidence collection and to accurately document events in a way that promotes member safety and department accountability and transparency while also protecting the privacy of members of the public.

The Vernon Hills Police Department may provide select members with access to body-worn cameras, for use during the performance of their duties. Select members include all sworn members, except for those ranked as Deputy Chief and Chief of Police.

423.3 RESPONSIBILITIES

423.3.1 BWC COORDINATOR RESPONSIBILITIES

The Chief of Police or the authorized designee should delegate certain responsibilities to a BWC coordinator.

The responsibilities of the coordinator include (50 ILCS 706/10-20):

- (a) Serving as a liaison between the Department and the BWC manufacturer/distributor and any third-party media storage vendor.
- (b) Acquiring sufficient BWCs to equip all law enforcement officers with BWCs while on duty (50 ILCS 706/10-15).
- (c) Ensuring BWCs are equipped with pre-event recording of at least 30 seconds prior to activation and can record for at least 10 hours as required by law.
- (d) Developing inventory procedures for issuing and tracking BWC equipment, including properly marking BWCs as property of the Department and recording the date each BWC is placed into or taken out of service.
- (e) Assisting with troubleshooting and maintenance of BWC equipment and media systems and, when necessary, coordinating the repair or replacement of BWCs.
 1. All equipment and system malfunctions and their resolutions should be documented, and maintenance and repair records should be maintained for all BWCs.
- (f) Managing BWC media systems so that:
 1. Systems used by the Department are authorized by ILETSB (50 ILCS 706/10-10).
 2. Access is limited to the minimum necessary authorized users and user privileges are restricted to those necessary for the member to conduct assigned department duties.
 3. Security requirements, such as two-factor authentication and appropriate password parameters, are in place for user credentials.

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- (g) Configuring BWC media systems, or developing manual procedures, so that media is appropriately categorized and retained according to the event type tagged by members.
- (h) Retaining audit logs or records of all access, alteration, and deletion of BWC media and media systems, and conducting periodic audits to ensure compliance with applicable laws, regulations, and department policy.
- (i) Developing and updating BWC training for members who are assigned a BWC or given access to BWC media systems.
- (j) Coordinating with the community relations coordinator to (see the Community Relations Policy):
 - 1. Provide the public with notice of the department's use of BWCs (e.g., posting on the department website).
- (k) Coordinating with the Deputy Chief of Support Services to (see the Records Section and Records Maintenance and Release policies):
 - 1. Determine and apply proper retention periods to BWC media.
 - 2. Develop procedures for the appropriate release of BWC media.
- (l) Coordinating with the Property and Evidence Section to develop procedures for the transfer, storage, and backup of evidentiary BWC media (see the Property and Evidence Section Policy).
- (m) Establishing procedures to comply with the Law Enforcement Officer-Worn Body Camera Act and guidelines developed by ILETSB for BWC use.
- (n) Assists with gathering information for the completion of the required annual report to ILETSB (50 ILCS 706/10-25). The Support Services Manager will be responsible for the completion of the annual report.

423.3.2 MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

Every member issued a BWC is responsible for its proper use, safekeeping, and maintenance.

At the beginning of each shift or period of BWC use, the member should inspect their assigned BWC to confirm it is charged and in good working order.

Members should wear their assigned BWC on their outermost garment positioned at or near chest level and as close to the center of their body as practicable. Members are responsible for ensuring there are no obstructions and that the BWC remains in a position suitable for recording.

When a BWC is not in the physical possession of the member to which it is assigned, it should be placed on the charging dock and stored in a secure location.

Members shall document and report any malfunction or damage to the BWC or associated equipment to the BWC coordinator and on-duty supervisor as soon as practicable and, if possible, obtain a functioning BWC to use either temporarily while repairs are being made to the member's BWC or as a permanent replacement (50 ILCS 706/10-20).

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Members shall document the existence of a recording in any report or other official record of the contact, including any instance where the recorder malfunctioned or the member deactivated the recording. Members should include the reason for deactivation.

423.4 BWC USE

The following guidelines apply to the use of BWCs:

- (a) Only department-issued BWCs should be used without the express consent of the Chief of Police or the authorized designee.
- (b) BWCs should only be used by the member or members to whom it was issued unless otherwise authorized by a supervisor.
- (c) The use of department-issued BWCs shall be strictly limited to department-related activities.
- (d) Members shall not use BWCs or BWC media systems for which they have not received prior authorization and appropriate training.
- (e) Members shall immediately report unauthorized access or use of BWCs or BWC media systems by another member to their supervisor or the Chief of Police.

423.4.1 PROHIBITIONS

BWCs should not be used to record (50 ILCS 706/10-20):

- (a) Routine administrative activities of the Department that do not involve interactions with the public. Care should be taken to avoid incidentally recording confidential documents that the Department has a duty to keep secure (i.e., criminal justice information).
- (b) Areas within the department facilities where members have a reasonable expectation of privacy (e.g., locker rooms or dressing areas, breakrooms) unless responding to a call for service or conducting an investigation.
- (c) Conversations of other members without their knowledge.
- (d) When a member is taking an authorized break or otherwise engaged in personal activities.
- (e) In a courtroom or correctional facility equipped with a functioning camera system unless responding to a call for service or emergency situation.
- (f) Interactions with undercover officers or confidential informants.
- (g) Strip searches.

BWCs shall not be used for the purpose of embarrassment, harassment, or ridicule of any individual or group.

423.5 ACTIVATION OF BWC

This policy is not intended to describe every possible situation in which the BWC should be used, although there are many situations where its use is appropriate. Members should activate the BWC any time the member believes it would be appropriate or valuable to record an incident.

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Officers shall ensure the BWC is in buffering mode during their tour of duty. This ensures that the previous 30 seconds of captured video is captured when the camera transitions to the active/event mode. Sleep mode may be used for brief periods of time while an officer needs momentary privacy (i.e., use of restroom), however the camera should be taken out of sleep mode and put back into buffering mode as soon as practical.

Members shall activate their BWC during all calls for service or during the performance of law enforcement-related encounters or activities. Members are not required to activate their BWC during casual or informal contacts with members of the public that are not part of or related to law enforcement-related encounters or activities, or while inside a patrol car equipped with functioning Mobile Audio/Video (MAV). However, members should activate their BWC any time a contact with an individual becomes hostile or adversarial, or the member has a reasonable articulable suspicion that the individual has committed or is in the process of committing a crime (50 ILCS 706/10-20).

Unless otherwise authorized by this policy or approved by a supervisor, BWCs shall remain activated until the call for service or law enforcement-related encounter or activity has concluded. A member may cease recording if they are simply waiting for a tow truck or a family member to arrive, or in other similar situations.

At no time is a member expected to jeopardize their safety to activate their BWC. However, the BWC should be activated as soon as reasonably practicable in required situations (50 ILCS 706/10-20).

If a member attempts to activate their BWC but the BWC fails to record an event, does not record the entire incident, or interrupts the recording for any reason, the member shall document verbally on the recording, the time, place and reason why the recording was not made or was discontinued. This shall also be documented in the officer's police report.

Officers should generally not record court-related matters including pre-trial conferences, depositions, or any other activity in the courtroom.

423.5.1 NOTICE OF RECORDING

Unless otherwise approved based on unique circumstances, a member should wear the BWC in a manner that is conspicuous and shall answer truthfully if asked whether they are equipped with a BWC or if their BWC is activated.

Personnel should recognize there are times when members of the public may develop a reasonable expectation of privacy based on circumstances unique to an incident (recordings occurring where persons are in a partial state of dress, recordings where third parties to a call for service can be heard over speaker phone but may not be aware they are being recorded, etc.) If an officer is uncertain as to whether a reasonable expectation of privacy exists, the officer shall provide verbal notice of recording. An example of notice is: "The police camera is operating and you are being audibly and visually recorded."

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423.5.2 PRIVACY CONSIDERATIONS

Members should remain sensitive to the dignity of individuals being recorded and should exercise sound discretion with respect to privacy concerns. Generally, persons having knowing contact with a uniformed police officer have no reasonable expectations of privacy in their communication with the officer. This applies even in a private residence.

When responding to a place where individuals have an expectation of privacy (e.g., medical or mental health facilities, restrooms) or to a sensitive situation (e.g., individuals partially or fully unclothed), members are permitted to mute or deactivate their BWC if it reasonably appears that the privacy concern outweighs any legitimate department interest in recording the event. Members may also mute or deactivate their BWC:

- (a) To protect the privacy of a victim or witness.
- (b) When an individual wishes to provide information anonymously.
- (c) To avoid recording a confidential informant or undercover officer.
- (d) When discussing case tactics or strategy.
- (e) During private conversations with other members or emergency responders.

Members shall deactivate their BWC when a victim, a witness, or a community member reporting a crime requests that the camera be turned off, unless exigent circumstances exist or the member has reasonable articulable suspicion that the individual has committed or is in the process of committing a crime. The individual's request to deactivate and the member's reason for continuing to record despite the request should be captured on the recording (50 ILCS 706/10-20).

Members should choose to mute rather than deactivate BWCs when practicable. Deactivation should only be used when muting the BWC will not accomplish the level of privacy necessary for the situation.

Before muting or deactivating their BWC, the member should verbally narrate the reason on the recording. As soon as possible once the privacy concern is no longer an issue, or when circumstances change so that the privacy concern no longer outweighs the department's interest in recording the event (e.g., the individual becomes combative, the conversation ends), the member should unmute or reactivate their BWC and verbally note that recording has resumed.

423.5.3 INVESTIGATORS AND SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS

Members who are not primarily responsible for patrol duties should use the Community Caretaking provision as the deciding point to activate their camera. When their duties transition from those of community caretaking into any of the factors listed in 439.5, officers assigned a BWC shall activate the system from buffering/sleep mode to event mode to record the entire incident

423.5.4 N.I.P.A.S. ASSIGNED PERSONNEL

In the course of NIPAS-related activities, member officers are permitted to use their BWCs in compliance with NIPAS Body Worn Camera Standard Operating Guidelines; provided, however, that use of a BWC in a NIPAS-related activity shall not be construed to constitute authorization to

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violate applicable provisions of this policy or the requirements of the Officer-Worn Body Camera Act.

423.5.5 CESSATION OF RECORDING

Once activated, the BWC should remain on continuously until the member reasonably believes that the member's direct participation in the incident is complete or the situation no longer fits the criteria for activation. Recording may be stopped during significant periods of inactivity such as report writing or other breaks from direct participation in the incident.

Officers are permitted to turn off BWCs while inside a patrol car equipped with Mobile Audio/Video (MAV). Cameras may also be turned off when the officer is not engaged in law enforcement-related activities. (50 ILCS 706/10-20).

423.5.6 SURREPTITIOUS USE OF THE BWC

Illinois law prohibits any individual from surreptitiously recording any conversation in which any party to the conversation has a reasonable belief that the conversation is private or confidential (720 ILCS 5/14-2). Members shall not surreptitiously record another Department member without a court order.

423.5.7 LIVESTREAMING

Livestreaming enables authorized individuals to remotely view the audio and video captured by a member's BWC in real time. Only supervisors and officers-in-charge approved by the Chief of Police or the authorized designee shall have access to livestreaming capabilities.

Livestreaming should only be activated:

- (a) For purposes of member safety when the member is not responding to their radio or there is some other indication of distress.
- (b) To assist with situational awareness or tactical decisions during a significant incident.
- (c) When requested by the member.

423.5.8 DOCUMENTATION

Members are encouraged to provide narration while using a BWC when it would be useful to provide context or clarification of the events being recorded. However, the use of a BWC is not a replacement for written reports and should not be referred to in a written report in place of detailing the event.

Every report prepared by a member who is issued a BWC should state "BWC available" or "BWC unavailable," as applicable, and should document:

- (a) To the extent practicable and relevant, the identity of individuals appearing in the BWC media.
- (b) An explanation of why BWC media is unavailable including any malfunction, damage, or battery issue that resulted in the failure of the BWC to capture all or part of the event.

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- (c) Any exigency or other circumstances that prevented the member from immediately activating the recording at the beginning of the event.
- (d) Any period of the event in which the member deactivated or muted their BWC and the reason for such action.

423.6 UPLOADING BWC MEDIA

Unless otherwise authorized by a supervisor, all media from a member's BWC should be properly uploaded and tagged as soon as practicable. BWC media related to a serious or high-profile event (e.g., search for a missing child, active shooter situation) should be uploaded and tagged as soon as practicable upon returning to the Department.

Following an officer involved shooting or death or other event deemed necessary, a supervisor should take possession of the BWC for each member present and upload and tag the BWC media.

423.6.1 TAGGING BWC MEDIA

Members should ensure all media captured by their BWC is tagged with their name and/or identification number, the case or incident number, title, and category. BWC media should be tagged upon uploading or, if capabilities permit tagging in the field, as close to the time of the event as possible. If more than one category applies to BWC media, it should be tagged with each event type. If BWC media can only be tagged with a single category, the media should be tagged using the event type with the longest retention period.

BWC media depicting sensitive circumstances or events should be tagged as restricted. BWC media should be flagged for supervisor review when it pertains to a significant event such as:

- (a) An incident that is the basis of a formal or informal complaint or is likely to result in a complaint.
- (b) When a member has sustained a serious injury or a line-of-duty death has occurred.
- (c) When a firearm discharge or use of force incident has occurred.
- (d) An event that has attracted or is likely to attract significant media attention.

Supervisors should conduct audits at regular intervals to confirm BWC media is being properly uploaded and tagged by their subordinates.

[See the Vernon Hills Police Department Procedures Manual: 304.1 IDENTIFICATION AND PRESERVATION OF RECORDINGS.](#)

423.7 BWC MEDIA

All BWC media is the sole property of the Department. Members shall have no expectation of privacy or ownership interest in the content of BWC media.

All BWC media shall be stored and transferred in a manner that is physically and digitally secure with appropriate safeguards to prevent unauthorized modification, use, release, or transfer. Contracts with any third-party vendors for the storage of BWC media should include provisions specifying that all BWC media remains the property of the Department and shall not be used by the vendor for any purpose without explicit approval of the Chief of Police or the authorized designee.

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Members shall not alter, copy, delete, release, or permit access to BWC media other than as permitted in this policy without the express consent of the Chief of Police or the authorized designee (50 ILCS 706/10-20).

BWC media systems should not be accessed using personal devices unless authorized by the Chief of Police or the authorized designee.

423.7.1 ACCESS AND USE OF BWC MEDIA

BWC media systems shall only be accessed by authorized members using the member's own login credentials and in accordance with the Information Technology Use Policy.

BWC media shall only be accessed and viewed for legitimate department-related purposes in accordance with the following guidelines (50 ILCS 706/10-20):

- (a) BWC media set as restricted should only be accessible by those designated by the Chief of Police or the authorized designee.
- (b) Members and their supervisors may review their own BWC media for department-related purposes and prior to completing incident reports or other documentation. However, members shall not review their BWC media or the BWC media of another member before completing their report or other documentation when the member has been involved in or is a witness to an officer-involved shooting, use of deadly force incident, or use of force incident resulting in great bodily harm; or is ordered to write a report in response to or during the investigation of a misconduct complaint against the member. In those instances, if the member prepared a report and subject to a supervisor's approval, they may file a supplemental report after reviewing BWC media and document that review in the supplemental report. In all other instances, members and supervisors should document in their report if they reviewed BWC media before completing the report.
- (c) Investigators may review BWC media pertaining to their assigned cases.
- (d) A member testifying regarding a department-related event may review the pertinent BWC media before testifying.
- (e) Supervisors are permitted to access and view BWC media of their subordinates.
 - 1. Supervisors should review BWC media that is tagged as a significant event or that the supervisor is aware pertains to a significant event.
 - 2. Supervisors should conduct documented reviews of their subordinate's BWC media at least annually to evaluate the member's performance, verify compliance with department procedures, and determine the need for additional training. The review should include a variety of event types when possible. Supervisors should review BWC media with the recording member when it would be beneficial to provide guidance or to conduct one-on-one informal training for the member.
 - 3. Supervisors should conduct periodic reviews of a sample of each subordinate's BWC media to evaluate BWC use and ensure compliance with this policy.

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- (f) The Deputy Chief of Support Services is permitted to access and view BWC media for training purposes.
 - 1. The Deputy Chief of Support Services should conduct a quarterly review of a random sampling of BWC media to evaluate department performance and effectiveness and to identify specific areas where additional training or changes to protocols would be beneficial. Training Committee members may review BWC media as part of their review to identify training needs.
 - 2. The Deputy Chief of Support Services or Deputy Chief of Operations may use BWC media for training purposes with the approval of the Chief of Police or the authorized designee. The Deputy Chiefs should use caution to avoid embarrassing or singling out a member and, to the extent practicable, should seek consent from the members appearing in the BWC media before its use for training. When practicable, sensitive issues depicted in BWC media should be redacted before being used for training.
- (g) The Deputy Chief of Support Services and Deputy Chief of Operations may access BWC media when necessary to conduct department-related duties.
- (h) The BWC coordinator may access BWC media and the BWC media system as needed to ensure the system is functioning properly, provide troubleshooting assistance, conduct audits, and fulfill other responsibilities related to their role.
- (i) A member's field training officer may access and review BWC media for training purposes.
- (j) Recorded files may also be reviewed:
 - 1. Upon approval by a supervisor, by any member of the Department who is participating in an official investigation, such as a personnel complaint, administrative investigation, or criminal investigation.
 - 2. Pursuant to lawful process or by court personnel who are otherwise authorized to review evidence in a related case.
 - 3. By media personnel with permission of the Chief of Police or the authorized designee.
 - 4. In compliance with a public records request, if permitted, and in accordance with the Records Maintenance and Release Policy.

[See the Vernon Hills Police Department Procedures Manual: 304.2 REVIEW OF RECORDED MEDIA FILES.](#)

423.7.2 PUBLIC ACCESS

Unless disclosure is required by law (e.g., FOIA release) or a court order, BWC media should not be released to the public if it unreasonably violates a person's privacy or sense of dignity or depicts the interior of:

- (a) A private residence.
- (b) A facility that offers health care, mental health or substance abuse treatment, or social services.

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- (c) A school building.
- (d) Any other building in which public access is restricted or which implicates heightened security concerns.

Requests for the release of BWC media shall be processed in accordance with the Records Maintenance and Release Policy and the Law Enforcement Officer-Worn Body Camera Act (50 ILCS 706/10-20). The Custodian of Records should review BWC media before public release.

423.8 RETENTION OF BWC MEDIA

BWC media should be retained on a BWC media system in accordance with state records retention laws but in no event for a period of less than 90 days. BWC media shall not be altered, erased, or destroyed prior to the expiration of the 90-day storage period. In the event any BWC media is altered, erased, or destroyed prior to the expiration of the 90-day storage period, the Chief of Police shall maintain a written record including the name of the individual who made such alteration, erasure, or destruction, and the reason for any such alteration, erasure, or destruction for one year (50 ILCS 706/10-20).

After the 90-day storage period, BWC media must be destroyed unless any of the following occur (50 ILCS 706/10-20):

- (a) A formal or informal complaint has been filed.
- (b) The member discharged a firearm or used force during the encounter.
- (c) Death or great bodily harm occurred to any person in the BWC media.
- (d) The encounter resulted in a detention or arrest other than a traffic stop resulting in only a minor traffic offense or a petty offense with a fine of more than \$1,000.
- (e) The member is the subject of an internal investigation or otherwise being investigated for possible misconduct.
- (f) The supervisor of the member, prosecutor, defendant, or court determines that the encounter has evidentiary value in a criminal prosecution.
- (g) The recording member requests that the BWC media be retained for official purposes related to their official duties or believes that it may have evidentiary value in a criminal prosecution.

Under these circumstances, the BWC media of the encounter shall not be altered or destroyed for two years. If the BWC media is used in a criminal, civil, or administrative proceeding, it shall not be destroyed except upon a final disposition and order from the court.

BWC media may be retained after the expiration of the 90-day storage period any time a supervisor designates it for training purposes and may be viewed by members, in the presence of a supervisor or training instructor, for the purposes of instruction, training, or ensuring compliance with department policies.

Unless circumstances justify continued retention, BWC media should be permanently deleted upon the expiration of the retention period in a way that it cannot be retrieved. BWC media shall

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not otherwise be deleted by any person without the authorization of the Chief of Police or the authorized designee.

423.8.1 ACCIDENTAL RECORDINGS

In the event of an accidental activation of the body worn camera during non-enforcement or non-investigative activities or in a situation where a reasonable expectation of employee privacy exists, officers may submit an email to their supervisor to have the event considered for restriction.

If approved by the supervisor, any such request will be forwarded to the Deputy Chief of Support Services to restrict access until the video is auto-purged from the system.

All users will be unable to access the video(s), which will be retained for the minimum statutory limit (90-days). The videos will be removed according to the third-party media storage vendor's automatic deletion schedule.

423.9 TRAINING

The BWC coordinator should ensure that each member issued a BWC receives initial training before use, and periodic refresher training thereafter. Training should include:

- (a) Proper use of the BWC device and accessories.
- (b) When BWC activation is required, permitted, and prohibited.
- (c) How to respond to an individual's request to stop recording.
- (d) Proper use of the BWC media systems, including uploading and tagging procedures.
- (e) Security procedures for BWC media, including appropriate access and use.

Members who are not issued a BWC but who have access to BWC media systems shall receive training on the BWC media system, including appropriate access, use, and security procedures.