



Seattle Police Department Body-Worn Video Program

Program Goal

To enhance public trust in the Seattle Police Department and provide greater transparency into officer actions.

Recording law enforcement interactions between officers and members of the public provides valuable information for officer accountability and effective criminal investigations.

Details

- SPD is contracting with Axon for cameras, digital storage, and software
- Uniformed officers will wear cameras on their upper torsos
- Videos will be encrypted and safely stored in the cloud
- Direct access to stored video footage is limited to authorized SPD personnel only
- Videos may be released publicly or to other agencies in specific circumstances, with sensitive portions blurred per state law
- Release of video may be due to public/media request, use as evidence in prosecution, or as part of investigation

Community Engagement

The Seattle City Council directed SPD to conduct two rounds of community engagement for the program. The process included regular meetings of a **stakeholder group** (members included representatives from the Seattle Community Police Commission, ACLU, and the Coalition Ending Gender-Based Violence), **roundtable discussions** (with 90+ community leaders invited), and **public meetings**.

Scope

- 850 front-line, uniformed officers in all precincts will wear cameras
- Some specialty units (SWAT, motorcycle traffic officers, etc.) will wear cameras
- Patrol cars will continue to use in-car video (“dash-cams”)

History

- Proof-of-concept pilot in early 2015 – gauged public and officer reactions to camera use
- Contract signed with Axon for camera materials in December 2016, following a competitive bidding process
- Three-month program pilot with West Precinct bike officers began December 2016 to gather information in preparation for department-wide use
- In May 2017, the SPD body-worn video policy was approved by a federal judge as part of the consent agreement with the Department of Justice

Current Status

- Seattle City Council released project funds in February 2017
- Former Mayor Murray issued Executive Order 2017-03, ordering SPD to begin City-wide officer training and body camera deployment
- Cameras are currently in use by officers in all precincts (around 800 officers)
- Specialty unit officers (SWAT, Traffic, etc.) are being trained and will start wearing cameras by late-February 2018 (around 120 officers)

For more information, please visit: www.seattle.gov/police/bodyworn

Updated: January 19, 2018

When Officers Start/Stop Recording

Start Recording

- Dispatched to 911 calls
- Traffic and “Terry” stops
- Officer views criminal activity
- Arrests and seizures
- Searches and inventories of vehicles, persons, or premises
- Suspect transport
- Vehicle pursuits
- Questioning suspects, victims, and witnesses



Stop Recording

- Resident or someone who has right to be in home directs an officer to turn off camera before entering a private residence (unless a crime is in progress or officers have a warrant)
- The officer has completed their investigation
- There is little possibility the officer will have further contact with any person in the event

When Officers Do Not Record or Have Discretion to Record

Do Not Record (Except for Direct Law Enforcement Purpose, Like a Crime In Progress)

- In restrooms
- In jails
- Interiors of medical, mental health, counseling, or therapeutic facilities
- Resident or someone who has right to be in home directs an officer to turn off camera before entering a private residence (unless a crime is in progress or officers have a warrant)
- Persons lawfully exercising their freedom of speech, press, association, assembly, or religion

Officers Have Discretion Over Whether to Record

- Scenes where respect for an individual’s privacy or dignity outweighs the need to record an event, such as:
 - Natural death scenes
 - Death notifications
 - Child or sexual assault victim interviews
 - Cultural or religious objections to being recorded
 - When the use of body-worn video would impede or limit the cooperation of a victim or witness