

Activation of Camera

1. What would trigger the activation of the “body camera”—or would it be “rolling” at all times without anything in particular to trigger its activation? The body camera would only record when it is activated by the officer or by a remote trigger. A 30-second pre-event recording feature is being requested to be in line with the current capabilities of our in car system.

2. If a “trigger” would be required, would that “trigger” be the same as what activates the vehicular “dash cam”? - The goal is for the body camera to automatically start based on event triggers such as opening front door - could also include siren, emergency lighting, selecting voice microphone, rear door, programmable vehicle speed, and vehicle impact meta-data as needed. Other triggers include synchronization with the vehicles digital mobile audio video (DMAV) system. Will validate triggers during proof of concept.

3. Would a police officer have the ability to turn off the “body camera”?

The body camera must include the ability to manually start and stop recording. Ideally, the device replaces the body microphone with in car video wireless audio.

4. Are there any special considerations for informants?

Current Policy does not have special consideration for informants. We should have the ability to redact sensitive information from videos if needed.

5. Has the “on-light” for camera operation been omitted?

Due to officer safety concerns it is important that body camera does not have light indicator that might expose officers location during dark conditions.

Making Video Public

6. Who would have access to the video footage—such as in a public request for information?

In a public records request we would comply with state law. Examples of legal requirements for requesting footage include:

1. A recording made in a private space or during a pedestrian or traffic stop may not be released without written authorization from the person who is the subject of the recording or, if the person is deceased, from the person’s authorized representative
2. A law enforcement agency shall release to a member of the public a recording that is not otherwise confidential or excepted from disclosure under this section on that person’s written request and payment of any required fee. The written request must include all of the following:

- i. the date and approximate time of the recording
- ii. the specific location where the recording occurred; and
- iii. the name of each person known to be a subject of the recording

7. How quickly would such video footage be made available to a member of the public making a request to view it?

Open records request will be handled promptly (as soon as possible) or an Attorney General's decision must be requested within ten (10) business days after receiving the request

Legislation does permit additional time for Voluminous requests (5 separate requests for body worn camera recordings from the same individual or entity in a 24 hour period OR multiple requests, same person, 24 hour period that constitute more than 5 total hours of video.

8. Under specific circumstances, do the faces of people—be it suspects or be it bystanders—need to be “blurred out” before the footage is released per a public information request?

Yes there will be occasions when individual’s faces need to be blurred out, IE juveniles. Requesting built in redaction software be included.

9. Are there any special requirements for minors who appear on the footage?

Yes. See question 8.

10. How long would “body camera” video be stored?

As of right now the body camera video will be stored for the length of time set by the Texas State Library Code. Minimum time 45 days for any event.

11. If “body camera” video reveals nothing significant, how would it be determined as to whether that footage should be purged in order to make room for new footage?

For Questions 10,11 - The recordkeeping system ensures records are retrievable and available until the expiration of their approved retention period. Texas Local Government Records Act §205.008(b). All camera footage is classified and retained according to the highest level of offense or administrative investigation. Videos that are no longer needed for evidentiary purposes will automatically roll off at the end of their retention period. Copies of videos may be maintained by prosecutors and defense attorneys as needed.

12. Will the Austin “police monitor” have priority access to “body camera” footage over the general public?

The police monitor has the ability to view camera footage in conjunction with a complaint or administrative inquiry per contract.

Pilot Project/Roll-out

13. For the pilot program that the Austin Police Department is planning to conduct with police “body cameras” how are the participants of that pilot program going to be chosen?

At this time no pilot program is being considered. A proof on concept will be included in the purchasing process and the body cameras will be rolled out in phases starting with the downtown area command.

14. Are there any special requirements for “SWAT” teams relative to “body cameras”?

They will be required to follow policy as all other officers. SWAT teams will be included in the rollout plan.

15. Once the pilot program has concluded, how will the roll-out be structured in terms of its time-length and in terms of its scope—would ALL Austin police officers be required to wear a “body camera”?

All officers assigned to patrol, highway enforcement, parks, special operations and organized crime (approx. 1300) are included in the rollout plan for being issued cameras. Additional cameras will be available for checkout for anyone else as needed.

Technology

16. How much recording time would the “body camera” have—perhaps 10 hours’ worth between uses?

The goal is to have a minimum 10 hours battery life (one shift). Based on research, most officers use approx. 2 hours of record time per shift. Officers will be required to charge the device and download videos at the end of their shift.

17. Will the “body camera” video be stored a multiple locations such that if something happened at one place of storage, there would be duplicate storage to ensure that images are preserved?

Cloud = multiple locations.

On premises, there will be a backup center.

18. What is the means by which the “body camera” would differentiate between its completion of use by one police officer and its commencement of use by a different police officer?

All patrol officers will be issued individual body cameras. There will be a pool of cameras available for non-patrol officers to checkout if needed. Officers should be able to enter identifying information when video is downloaded (badge number, case number, etc.)

18a. Will cameras have non-visible infrared lighting added for better night time operation?

The body camera operates in low-light conditions to record the same image seen by the officer.

18b. What minimum camera image resolution is considered acceptable?

Standard Definition 640x480, 720p preferred

18c. What minimum audio recording specification is acceptable, e.g. 8 or 16 bit samples, 32Khz freq, etc.

This has not been specified. Vendors responding to the RFI did not include audio specifications in their responses. Will research capabilities and industry best practices.

18d. Does the body camera dump its recording data to an in-car device live, periodically, or only at end of shift back at HQ?

Download options are vendor specific but vary from continuous wireless upload to docking station at the end of the shift.

Body Camera Reliability Concerns

19. Is there any testing of a "body camera" to verify that a given "body camera" is in fact in proper working order at the beginning of a police shift?

Yes, included in policy to be in line with current in car system.

20. If there is a malfunction of a "body camera" how would that be addressed?

It is covered in proposed body camera policy 303.2 (f)

"Employees who discover an operational defect with the BWDR system will attempt to correct the system following the received training on the device (I.E.: Reseating cables, Cycling the power, etc.). If the BWDR is found to have a physical defect or malfunction, the Employee will notify the supervisor, and write up the device for service describing the events leading up to failure. "

Additional cameras will be available at PCO for officers to checkout as needed.

21. If the "body camera" fails to capture the image of a police officer shooting and/or killing someone, what would be the policy for that?

APD Policy 303 and 304 Mobile Audio and video recording covers this and outlines when a camera will be used and when it can be turned off. The discipline matrix varies according to the violation and ranges from a written reprimand to Indefinite Suspension.

The discipline matrix varies for the violation committed:

Electronic Recording (DMAV, MAV) violation:

First offense- written reprimand up to 1-3 day suspension

Second offense- increased one level

Third offense- increased one level

Intentional Electronic Recording (DMAV, MAV) violation:

first offense- 4-15 day suspension

second offense- increase one level

third offense- increase one level

Intentional Electronic Recording (DMAV, MAV) violation at a criminal incident:

first offense- Indefinite suspension

Future Considerations

22. If it turns out that these “body cameras” are an excellent idea, should their use later be expanded to Firefighters, EMS workers, and City of Austin Security / Parking personnel?