



Lethbridge County Policy Handbook

EFFECTIVE: August 6, 2015

SECTION: 200 NO. 214 Page 1 of 5

APPROVED BY: County Council

SUBJECT: CPO Body-Worn
Cameras

REVISED DATE:

I. BACKGROUND, SCOPE AND PURPOSE

- A. Body-worn cameras are an effective law enforcement tool that can reduce violent confrontations and complaints against officers. Body-worn cameras provide additional documentation of peace officer-public encounters and may be an important tool for collecting evidence and maintaining public trust.
- B. This policy is intended to provide officers with instructions on when and how to use body-worn cameras.
- C. The Department has adopted the use of body-worn cameras to accomplish several objectives, including:
 - i. Body-worn cameras allow for accurate documentation of peace officer-public contacts, arrests and critical incidents. They also serve to enhance the accuracy of officer reports and testimony.
 - ii. Audio and video recordings enhance the Department's ability to review probable cause for enforcement, officer-public interaction, and evidence for investigative and prosecutorial purposes and to provide additional information for officer evaluation and training.
 - iii. Body-worn cameras may also be useful in documenting accident scenes or other events that include the confiscation and documentation of evidence.
- D. The Department recognizes that video images cannot always show the full story nor do video images capture an entire scene. The use of body-worn cameras does not reduce the requirement to provide thorough written documentation of an incident. Persons reviewing recordings must also be cautious before conclusions are reached about what the recordings show.

II. OVERVIEW

- A. The body-worn cameras should be utilized to (1) collect evidence that can be used in the prosecution of offenses, (2) record contacts with the public in order to secure unbiased evidence in connection with investigations, (3) allow for supervisory review to ensure that department policies and procedures are followed, and (4) capture footage that would be helpful for training.



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- B. Body-worn cameras are camera systems designed to be worn by peace officers to capture digital multimedia evidence.

III. DEFINITIONS

- A. Digital Multimedia Evidence or DME consists of all digital recordings, to include but not limited to audio, photographs, and their associated metadata. Metadata includes any digital identifiers that are captured as part of the actual recording, such as date/time, GPS coordinates, labeling, etc.

IV. LEGAL ISSUES

- A. Body-worn camera equipment and all data, images, video and metadata captured, recorded, or otherwise produced by the equipment is the property of the County. The personal use of all information recording by body-worn cameras shall only be pursuant to the prior written approval of the supervisor.
- B. Use of body-worn cameras for any purpose other than in accordance with this policy is prohibited.
- C. All data, images, video and metadata captured by body-worn cameras are subject to applicable provincial and federal statutes including FOIP.

V. PROCEDURES

- A. Prior to using a body-worn camera, officers shall receive Department-approved training on its proper operation and care and the County's policy with respect to the use of the body-worn camera. Additional training shall be provided at periodic intervals to ensure the continued effective use of the equipment, proper calibration and performance, and to incorporate changes, updates, or other revisions in policies or equipment.
- B. Body-worn cameras and equipment should be used with reasonable care to ensure proper functioning. Equipment malfunctions shall be brought to the attention of the officer's supervisor as soon as possible so that a replacement unit may be assigned. Officers shall inspect and test body-worn cameras prior to each shift to verify proper functioning, and shall notify their supervisor of any problems.



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- C. In the event that a body-worn camera is lost, upon discovery the officer shall immediately notify his/her supervisor.
- D. Officers shall wear body-worn cameras above the midline of their torso and in position designed to produce an effective recording.
- E. Officers shall store issued body-worn cameras under lock and key, accessible only to the officer and the supervisor, while off duty or when not in use.
- F. Officers shall not use personally-owned body-worn cameras while on duty.

VI. OPERATION OF BODY-WORN CAMERAS

- A. Except as otherwise provided in this policy, officers shall activate body-worn cameras to record all enforcement and complaint based contacts with citizens in the performance of official duties.
- B. Wherever possible officers should inform individuals that they are being recorded. Officers have no obligation to stop recording in response to a citizen's request if the recording is pursuant to an investigation, arrest, lawful search, or the circumstances clearly dictate that continued recording is necessary. However, officers should but may evaluate the situation and when appropriate, honor the citizen's request. The request to turn the camera off should be recorded, as well as the officer's response.
- C. Deactivation of the body-worn camera shall occur when:
 - i. The event is concluded.
 - ii. The contact with the subject(s) has concluded.
 - iii. All persons stopped have been released.
 - iv. The officer's vehicle mounted camera serves as an adequate alternate.
- D. If an officer fails to activate a body-worn camera, or fails to record the entire contact, the officer shall document the reasons for doing so.
- E. Non-department personnel shall not be allowed to review the recordings unless pursuant to written consent of the supervisor.



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- F. Officers shall not be required to activate body-worn cameras when engaged in conversations with individuals with whom the officer is in a privileged relationship (e.g. spouse, attorney, police peer counselor, labor representative, minister, etc.).
- G. Officers shall not edit, alter, erase, duplicate, copy, share or otherwise distribute in any manner body-worn camera images and information without the prior written approval of the supervisor.
- H. Officers shall be allowed to review the recordings from their officer-worn body cameras at any time. To help ensure accuracy and consistency, officers are encouraged to review recording prior to preparing reports. If the officer is giving a formal statement about the use of force or if the officer is the subject of a disciplinary investigation, the officer shall (1) have the option of reviewing the recordings in the presence of the officer's attorney or labor representative, and (2) have the right to review recordings from other body-worn cameras capturing the officer's image or voice during the underlying incident.
- I. Body-worn cameras shall not be used to record:
 - i. Communications with other peace/police personnel.
 - ii. Encounters with undercover officers or informants.
 - iii. When an officer is on break or is otherwise engaged in personal activities.
 - iv. In any location where individuals have a reasonable expectation of privacy, such as a restroom, locker room, or break room.
 - v. When an officer would be recording a patient during a medical or psychological evaluation by a clinician or similar professional, or during treatment. When recording in hospitals or other medical facilities, officers shall be careful to avoid recording persons other than the suspect.

VII. HANDLING OF DIGITAL MULTIMEDIA EVIDENCE

- A. All files from body-worn cameras shall be securely downloaded no later than the end of the officer's shift. Each file shall contain information related to the date, body-worn camera identifier, and assigned officer.
- B. All files from body-worn cameras shall be securely stored in accordance with County records retention policies and for no longer than useful for purposes of training, or for use in an investigation or prosecution (including appeals), or for use in resolving a claim, pending litigation, or disciplinary investigation.



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- C. It is not the intent of the Department to review DME for the purpose of general performance review, for routine preparation of performance reports or evaluation, or to discover policy violations. Supervisors and internal affairs personnel may access DME for administrative investigations. Other than periodic supervisory reviews to ensure that equipment is functioning properly, the scope of the review of DME should be limited to the specific complaint against the officer. Inadvertent discovery of other allegations during this review shall require the supervisor to articulate the purpose of expanding the scope.
- D. Requests for deletion of portions of a recording from a body-worn camera (e.g. in the event of a privileged or personal recording) must be submitted in writing to the supervisor in accordance with County records retention policy.
- E. Recordings from body-worn cameras may be shown for training purposes upon completion of a criminal case. All such use shall be pursuant to the written authority of the supervisor.

VIII. RETENTION AND DESTRUCTION OF DIGITAL MULTIMEDIA EVIDENCE

- A. The retention and destruction of DME shall be pursuant to County records retention policy.
- B. All stored DME is subject to release in accordance with the County records retention policy. Officers shall be provided with at least one week's notice of any FOIP request made to review DME from their body-worn cameras.