



**Valdez Police Department
Policies & Procedures
Law Enforcement**



Chapter/Section: 220	Page 1 of 5	Effective Date: 5.1.2021	Approved By: Chief Hinkle 
Title: Body Worn Cameras (BWC)		Replaces: (if applicable)	

220.100 PURPOSE

This policy is intended to provide officers with instructions on when and how to use body-worn cameras (BWCs), so that officers may reliably record their contacts with the public in accordance with the law.

220.300 POLICY

It is the policy of this department that officers shall activate the BWC when such use is appropriate to the proper performance of his or her official duties (as described below in the procedure), where the recordings are consistent with this policy and law. This policy does not govern the use of surreptitious recording devices used in undercover operations.

220.600 PROCEDURES

A. Administration

This agency has adopted the use of Body Worn Cameras to accomplish several objectives. The primary objectives are as follows:

1. BWCs allow for accurate documentation of police-public contacts, arrests, and critical incidents. They also serve to enhance the accuracy of officer reports and testimony in court.
2. Audio and video recordings also enhance this agency's ability to review probable cause for arrest, officer and suspect interaction, and evidence for investigative and prosecutorial purposes and to provide additional information for officer evaluation and training.
3. The BWC may also be useful in documenting crime and accident scenes or other events that include the confiscation and documentation of evidence or contraband.

B. Who Must Wear the BWC

Uniformed officers whose primary functions is to answer calls for service and interact with the public and/or all officers who have a reasonable expectation that they will.

C. When and How to Use the BWC

1. Officers shall activate the BWC to record all contacts with citizens in the performance of official duties, including, but not limited to:
 - traffic stops
 - motor vehicle collisions where the parties to the collision are present
 - suspicious vehicles or persons
 - field contacts
 - DUI investigations
 - arrests
 - on the scene of all violent crimes
 - emotionally disturbed persons
 - whenever weapons are present or alleged to be present
 - any self-initiated activity which may reasonably result in a criminal investigation or adversarial citizen contact
 - when responding to any "in progress" calls for service
 - any contact with an individual suspected of violating any law
 - all field contacts involving actual or suspected criminal conduct
 - Officer/Inmate interactions within the Valdez Jail (excluding strip searches and administrative functions such as dispensing medication and meal service)

2. Additionally, the BWC shall be activated during the following situations: while operating a vehicle in a manner that requires activation of its lights and siren under law, during tactical activities, including the execution of search warrants, during warrantless searches of individuals, vehicles, buildings, and other places, and during the initial inventory of seized drugs, guns, money, or any high value property.

3. If an officer is operating a vehicle equipped with an in-car video system, the officer shall utilize their BWC, as well as the in-car video system, when applicable.

4. The BWC should remain activated until the event is completed in order to ensure the integrity of the recording unless the contact moves into an area restricted by this policy (see section E: Restrictions on Using the BWC).

5. If an officer fails to activate the BWC, fails to record the entire contact, or interrupts the recording, the officer shall document, in their incident report, why a recording was not made, was interrupted, or was terminated.

6. In those instances where an officer mutes the BWC (for example, while conferring with a fellow officer during the arrest decision phase of a DV investigation) documentation should include verbal acknowledgement on the camera before going on 'mute', and again after disabling 'mute'.

D. Procedure for BWC Use

1. BWC equipment is issued to all sworn Law Enforcement personnel. Officers who are assigned BWC equipment must use the equipment unless otherwise authorized by supervisory personnel.
2. Police personnel shall use only BWCs issued by this department. The BWC equipment and all data, images, video, and metadata captured, recorded, or otherwise produced by the equipment is the sole property of the City of Valdez.
3. Police personnel who are assigned BWCs will be trained in the basic operation of the camera and upload procedures. BWC equipment is the responsibility of individual officers and will 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 issued.
4. Officers will take the cameras home with them at the end of each shift. Officers are provided a BWC charger for their residence and are expected to maintain the BWC in a properly charged, secured, and functioning manner. This will ensure that the officers have the body camera with them while driving their patrol car, or in the event they are called at home and asked to respond to an event.
5. Body worn cameras may be mounted in a variety of locations to fit officer preference and policing style. The BWC will be mounted on the officer's upper torso, and no higher than the shoulder. It shall be pointed at a forward angle when standing in a manner consistent with the officer's normal posture. It should be mounted in the most secure manner possible, using a department provided mount.
6. Officers are encouraged to inform their supervisor of any recordings that may be of value for training purposes.
7. Officers shall not edit, alter, erase, duplicate, copy, share, or otherwise distribute in any manner BWC recordings without prior written authorization and approval of the Chief of Police or his or her designee. Videos may be shared within the department for training purposes, with the DA's office, or other state agency's (like OCS), with the approval of a supervisor.
8. The department reserves the right to limit or restrict employees from viewing video files.
9. Requests for deletion of portions of the recordings (e.g., in the event of a personal recording) must be submitted in writing via BWC Recording Deletion/Redaction Request and approved by the Chief of Police, or designee, in accordance with state record retention laws. All requests and final decisions shall be kept on file.

E. Restrictions on Using the BWC

BWCs shall be used only in conjunction with official law enforcement duties. The BWC shall not generally be used to record:

1. Communication with another member of this department without the expressed knowledge and consent of all parties, unless the conversation is during the course of a criminal investigation in which the officer reasonably believes that such a recording will be beneficial to the investigation.
2. Encounters with undercover officers or confidential informants;
3. When on breaks or otherwise engaged in personal activities;
4. A victim of a sexual assault or other sensitive crime who requests the interview not to be recorded (in this instance the Officer shall document the request and record the interview via a (DAR) digital audio recorder);
5. In any location where individuals have a reasonable expectation of privacy, such as a restroom or locker room, or in a medical facility unless the activation is for the purposes of official law enforcement activity such as a call for service or escorting a suspect/arrestee.
6. Strip searches

220.610 STORAGE

- A. All files shall be uploaded periodically and all reasonable efforts shall be made to ensure it occurs no later than the end of each shift. Each file shall contain information related to the date, BWC identifier, and assigned officer.
- B. All images and sounds recorded by the BWC are the exclusive property of the Valdez Police Department. Accessing, copying, or releasing files for non-law enforcement purposes is strictly prohibited.
- C. Files should be securely stored in accordance with state records retention laws and the City of Valdez record retention thresholds. The Department shall retain all BWC recordings for a minimum of ninety (90) days, after which recordings may be erased, destroyed or recycled.
- D. Proper retention is dependent on officers categorizing the video correctly. Officers may classify their recordings on the BWC as: No Event, Investigations, Arrest, or Traffic Stop.
 - a. No Event: Any recording that does not fit under another listed classification and does not include enforcement action (arrest/citation). Example: Welfare Checks, Field Contacts. No Event recordings are retained for a minimum of 90 days.

- b. Investigations: Any recording that is directly related to a Police Department case and reflects investigatory procedures, such as interviews and search warrant execution. Recordings classified as Investigations are retained for a minimum of 365 days.
 - c. Arrest: Any recording in which official police enforcement action occurs, including an arrest, criminal summons, or citation for a minor offense violation. Recordings classified as Investigations are retained for a minimum of 365 days.
 - d. Traffic Stop: Any recording of an event in which a vehicular traffic stop occurred and did not result in an arrest or citation being issued. Recordings classified as Investigations are retained for a minimum of 180 days.
- E. Notwithstanding any other provisions of this policy, a BWC recording may be saved for a longer or indefinite period of time as part of a specific case if deemed relevant to a criminal, civil or administrative matter.

220.620 SUPERVISORY RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. Supervisory personnel shall ensure that officers equipped with BWC devices utilize them in accordance with policy and procedures defined herein.
- B. At least on a monthly basis, supervisors will randomly review BWC recordings to ensure that the equipment is operating properly and that officers are using the devices appropriately and in accordance with policy and to identify any areas in which additional training or guidance is required.