Frequently Asked Questions about Body Worn Cameras

In the fall semester of 2022, The University of Richmond Police Department will be implementing a body worn camera program. All uniform officers and supervisors assigned to patrol will wear body worn cameras. A body worn camera will be activated on all calls for service and law enforcement related officer-initiated interactions. A body worn camera will provide a video and audio record of events that serves as an objective standard. Our BWC program is designed to increase our accountability to you.

**Q: What is a BWC?**
A: A BWC is a small battery powered camera worn by police in plain sight chest high on the front of their uniform.

**Q: What brand of cameras does URPD use?**
A: URPD has chosen to use BWCs made by Axis.

![4” X 2” BWC Image]

**Q: Will the cameras record audio and video?**
A: Yes.

**Q: How will someone know if they are being recorded by the BWC?**
A: If asked, the officer will tell individuals they are being recorded. Additionally, under normal operation, the camera has a red indicator light on the front of it to show it is recording. The camera also beeps every two minutes to indicate it is recording. Generally, officer’s BWCs are not activated during their routine patrol of campus.

**Q: When are officers required to activate their BWC?**
A: Officers start their BWC when they arrive at the location of a dispatched call for service, or at any time they initiate contact with someone for a law enforcement purposes such as a traffic stop.

**Q: If I walk by an officer or ask an officer to present a topic to a community group, am I being recorded?**
A: No. BWCs will be activated only on all calls for service and officer-initiated law enforcement activities.

**Q: Can the public view the BWC videos?**
A: No, BWC videos are law enforcement records. Our Police Department maintains a statutory obligation to disclose certain criminal incident information that can be found on the University Crime Log maintained by URPD at [https://police.richmond.edu/reports/index.html](https://police.richmond.edu/reports/index.html). The source of the obligation is the Code of Virginia and not FOIA.

However, there may be situations in which the release of video may benefit the community, this may occur with the approval of the Chief of Police and University Counsel.

Other releases may include:
- Video associated with an arrest will be made available to the appropriate Commonwealth Attorney.
• Video may be released for the purposes of a Title IX investigation or student conduct processes if requested. If this occurs, the video changes from a law enforcement record to an academic record.
• As part of a legal process.
• If a member of our community initiates a complaint against a Police Officer, the investigating supervisor may allow the complainant an opportunity to view the police video at URPD by appointment as part of the investigation if needed or requested.

Q: Can officers record in my room?
A: Yes. Officers are required to record when they are in your room related to a call for service or related to a law enforcement action. The officer will not record in any other situation such as helping during move-in or move out, etc.

Q: Can officers stop the recording of the BWCs?
A: Other than for very limited and specific situations, officers are required to record through the end of an incident. A URPD supervisor with cause, has the discretion to stop an officer’s recording.

Q: Will an officer continue to record during sensitive situations such as mental health or sexual assault incidents?
A: Our policy allows for a balancing act on this critical privacy question.

• Documenting the first moments of arrival to a location using a BWC captures evidence to include spontaneous voluntary statements that can support a victim’s testimony that may develop days or weeks later.

• However, once an officer determines that first responders and all the parties at the specific location are safe and free of harm, our policy allows for the use of reasonable judgement by the officer to stop recording. This may occur at the request of a victim/survivor or to help de-escalate and stabilize a person experiencing a mental or emotional health incident.

• While in a health care facility, the officer will abide by the patient privacy policies of the health care facility, which could restrict or limit the officer from recording for law enforcement purposes.

Q: How long are videos stored?
A: Videos are stored for 180 days. Videos containing evidence of a crime will be maintained longer.