



# 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.

## 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”)

## Details

- SPD is contracting with Axon for cameras, digital storage, and software
- Cameras will be worn on the upper torso of officers
- Videos will be encrypted and safely stored in 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

## 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 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

## 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**.

## Current Status

- Seattle City Council released project funds in February 2017
- Mayor issued Executive Order requiring officers to wear cameras on July 17<sup>th</sup>
- Cameras currently in use by West Precinct officers (around 180 officers)
- North Precinct patrol officers being trained and will start wearing cameras by mid-October 2017 (around 190 officers)

## 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 impeded or limit the cooperation of a victim or witness