

FAQ Body Cameras

#1 What is a body camera?

A small, battery-powered camera worn by police officers on their uniform that captures interactions with the public from the police officers point of view.

#2 Why is the Austin Police Department proposing to have their officers use body cameras?

The Austin Police department is implementing a body worn camera program with the intent of creating greater transparency and accountability in its contacts with the public.

#3 Are there any state laws that govern body cameras?

Yes. Sec. 1 Chapter 1701, Occupations Code, Subchapter N, Body Worn Camera Program

#4 Will the Austin Police Department have a policy governing the use of body cameras?

Yes. The policy is currently under review and in draft form.

#5 When will police officers be recording with their body cameras?

Police officers will activate their body camera whenever they respond to calls for service or have citizen contacts where they anticipate taking law enforcement action.

#6 How will I know if I am being recorded? Will the body camera have a flashing light or other indicator that it is recording?

For officer safety concerns, the body camera will not have a flashing light or other indicator that it is recording. The best rule of thumb is to assume that the officer is always recording while taking law enforcement action.

#7 Does an officer have to stop recording if I ask him/her to?

No. A police officer is not required to stop recording upon request.

#8 Are there places where officers cannot use their body cameras?

Typically officers will not record in places where an expectation of privacy exists, such as restrooms — unless there's reasonable suspicion a crime is being committed or the recording of the location is material to a criminal investigation.

#9 What is the process for obtaining a copy of a body camera video?

Open Record Requests for body camera videos may be submitted to the Austin Police Department's Central Records Division (management.records@austintexas.gov). Media requests should be sent to Police3@austintexas.gov. Per state law, a person requesting a

video needs the date and approximate time of the recording, the specific location where the recording occurred, and the name of one or more of the people on the recording. There are additional requirements for recordings made in a private space, such as a private residence. To obtain private residence recordings the requestor will need to have written permission from the person(s) captured on the recording.

#10 Do body cameras record both audio and video?

Yes.

#11 Will the camera have night vision or infrared capability?

No. The camera will be able to record in low light conditions comparable to what the human eye can see.

#12 Where will the video be stored?

The video will be stored on secure servers in compliance with federal Criminal Justice Information System (CJIS) standards. These storage locations may either be a local server storage or a cloud based storage location.

#13 How long will video be kept?

All video will be kept for a minimum of 90 days, but will be maintained longer depending on the type of incident in compliance with state record retention laws.

#14 How can I know if a video has been altered?

Police officers will not be able to alter or delete original videos. The system will be designed with security “hash tags” that will mark the original videos, so that any alteration can be identified.