

Body-Worn Camera Policy

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 police-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 Yalobusha County Sheriff's Department has adopted the use of body-worn cameras to accomplish several objectives, including:

1. Body-worn cameras allow for accurate documentation of police-public contacts, arrests, and critical incidents. They also serve to enhance the accuracy of officer reports and testimony.
2. Audio and video recordings enhance the Department'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. Body-worn cameras may also be useful in documenting crime and accident scenes or other events that include the confiscation and documentation of evidence or contraband.

D. The Yalobusha County Sheriff's 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 criminal 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.

III. DEFINITIONS

A. Body-worn cameras are camera systems designed to be worn by deputy sheriffs to capture digital multimedia evidence.

B. Digital Multimedia Evidence or DME consists of all digital recordings, to include but not limited to audio, video, 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 Yalobusha County Sheriff's Department. The personal use of all information recording by body-worn cameras shall only be pursuant to the prior written approval of the Sheriff.

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 the laws of the State of Mississippi and County policies regarding retention of records.

V. PROCEDURES

A. Prior to using a body-worn camera, officers shall receive Department-approved training on its proper operation and care and the Department'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 deputy's supervisor as soon as possible so that a replacement unit may be assigned. Deputies shall inspect and test body-worn cameras prior to each shift to verify proper functioning, and shall notify their supervisor of any problems.

C. In the event that a body-worn camera is lost, upon discovery the deputy shall immediately notify his/her supervisor.

D. Deputies shall wear body-worn cameras above the midline of their torso and in position designed to produce an effective recording.

E. Deputies shall not use personally-owned body-worn cameras while on duty.

F. Deputies assigned a body-worn camera may use the camera at approved off-duty employment, but only in connection with their Department duties. If used for this purpose, the deputy shall download all DME during their next regularly assigned on-duty shift.

VI. OPERATION OF BODY-WORN CAMERAS

A. Except as otherwise provided in this policy, deputies shall activate body-worn cameras to record all contacts with citizens in the performance of official duties.

B. Private citizens do not have a reasonable expectation of privacy when talking with a law enforcement officer during the scope of a law enforcement officer's official duties, even when the contact is in a private residence. Therefore, a law enforcement officer is not required to give notice he or she is recording. A Deputy has 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, deputies 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 deputy's response.

C. Deactivation of the body-worn camera shall occur when:

1. The event has concluded;
2. Victim and/or witness contact has concluded;
3. All persons stopped have been released;
4. Once an arrestee has been placed into a vehicle to be transported to a detention facility. However, the deputy's transporting the arrestee to the detention facility shall keep the deputies body-worn camera activated until custody of the individual is transferred to the detention facility.

D. If a deputy fails to activate a body-worn camera, or fails to record the entire contact, the deputy 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 Sheriff.

F. Deputies 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. Deputies 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 Sheriff or the Chief Deputy.

H. Deputies shall be allowed to review the recordings from their deputy-worn body cameras at any time. To help ensure accuracy and consistency, deputies are encouraged to review recording prior to preparing reports. If the deputy 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 deputies attorney and (2) have the right to review recordings from other body-worn cameras capturing the deputies image or voice during the underlying incident.

I. Body-worn cameras shall not be used to record:

1. Communications with other police personnel.
2. Encounters with undercover officers or informants.
3. When an officer is on break or is otherwise engaged in personal activities.
4. In any location where individuals have a reasonable expectation of privacy, such as a restroom, locker room, or break room.
5. 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.

6. Communications made in a psychiatric facility, unless responding to a call involving a suspect who is thought to be present in the facility.

VII. HANDLING OF DIGITAL MULTIMEDIA EVIDENCE

A. All files from body-worn cameras shall be securely downloaded no later than the end of the deputy'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 state records retention laws 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. In capital punishment prosecutions, files shall be kept until the alleged offender is no longer under control of a criminal justice agency.

C. It is not the intent of the Yalobusha County Sheriff's 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 Sheriff in accordance with state records retention laws.

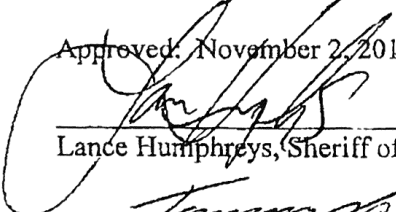
E. Recordings from body-worn cameras may be shown for training purposes upon completion of a criminal case. All such use shall be pursuant to the written authority of the Sheriff. Deputies shall be provided with at least thirty days' notice if recordings intended for use for training purposes were either made by them or captured their image or voice.

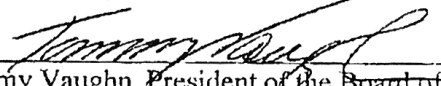
VIII. RETENTION AND DESTRUCTION OF DIGITAL MULTIMEDIA EVIDENCE

A. The retention and destruction of DME shall be pursuant to state public records retention laws.

B. All stored DME is subject to release in accordance with the state public records retention laws. Officers shall be provided with at least one week's notice of any public requests made to review DME from their body-worn cameras.

Approved: November 2, 2015


Lance Humphreys, Sheriff of Yalobusha County, Mississippi


Tommy Vaughn, President of the Board of Supervisors of Yalobusha County, Mississippi