



DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

# LAW ENFORCEMENT OPERATIONS POLICY AND PROCEDURES

## 7.3.1p19. Chapter 19: Patrol Vehicle Video and Body-Worn Cameras

Revised:

Last Reviewed: March 26, 2024; and February 15, 2023;

Adopted: June 1, 2023.



### I. PURPOSE

- A. Establishes a standard operating procedure for using patrol vehicle video equipment and body-worn cameras or recording devices for those agencies using them.
- B. Establishes a standard operating procedure for using personally owned electronic devices.

### II. RULES AND REGULATIONS

The purpose of patrol cars and body-worn cameras is to improve evidentiary outcomes, enhance safety, and improve interactions between officers and the public. **(GLECP 1.22a)**

#### A. Patrol Vehicle Video Equipment/Body Worn Cameras **(GLECP 1.22)**

##### 1. Policy

All video cameras installed in departmental vehicles will activate when the emergency lights are activated and remain operational until emergency light use is discontinued or until the system is manually overridden. Video cameras will be activated during any traffic stop. The camera will be positioned, whenever possible, to capture the violator's vehicle so that the license plate and the passenger compartment are recorded. This procedure is also required on any other events, incidents, transports, or calls for service requiring a police response. The recording equipment will be activated prior to making contact with the citizen, and the recording systems will not be deactivated until the call

for service has been completed. **(GLECP 1.22b)**

If a vehicle with inoperable equipment is to be used, the officer must have a departmental-approved portable recording device for use in the above situations.

BWCs will be activated anytime officers make contact with citizens officially. Any call for service or other citizen contacts beyond a consensual encounter shall be recorded. BWCs will be activated prior to making contact with the citizen and shall not be deactivated until the call for service or citizen encounter has concluded. The only exception is outlined below about traffic-related incidents. **(GLECP 1.22b)**

All BWCs assigned to officers who do not have video cameras installed in their vehicles will be activated before contacting citizens during any traffic stop or accident investigations.

All officers will have body-worn cameras assigned to them while on duty. Additionally, all enforcement personnel must utilize body-worn cameras when working designated unique details, extra-duty jobs, and participating in events that may lead to enforcement actions.

This policy does not govern the use of surreptitious recording devices in undercover operations.

## 2. Procedure

When beginning a tour of duty, officers will ensure the video recording equipment is in proper working order. If a camera is not functioning correctly, the on-duty supervisor will be notified so a replacement may be issued.

### a. Digital In-Car Camera Procedures **(GLECP 1.22e)**

All vehicles equipped with a digital in-car camera system will include a digital video camera, digital video recorder, and audio body microphone (body pack) capable of recording audio footage and activating the video system remotely. The system will not allow previously registered audio/video to be overwritten or erased.

- i. When beginning a tour of duty, each patrol officer assigned to a vehicle with a digital in-car camera system will inspect and prepare the camera system for use by logging onto the system and ensuring the date and time are correct on the recording system. The officer will notify the shift supervisor if the recording equipment is not functioning correctly.

The in-car camera system will complete a log of all activity during the officer's tour of duty, which can be accessed later during playback once transferred to the storage server. Officers are encouraged to activate the in-car camera system, even on those calls where the on-body camera is not mandated. For example, if the officer knows that wireless reception will not occur due to distance from the patrol vehicle or the structure they are entering does not allow for reception, the officer does not have to activate the in-car system.

- ii. All officers will receive training on in-car and body-worn camera systems.
- b. Use of Audio Body Pack
- All officers will ensure that their body packs are synced with their camera systems at the beginning of their tour of duty. All officers will ensure the audio is activated when the camera is recording. Sometimes it may be appropriate to ensure the audio is recording, even though the camera cannot record evidentiary video. The recording light on the camera lens will be illuminated when the audio is activated. Officers are reminded to turn the AM/FM radio down or off during such recording to enhance the quality of the in-car audio recording.
- i. The audio body pack will be worn on the uniform to not muffle or interfere with the audio recording.
  - ii. The audio body pack will be fully charged before the officer's tour of duty.
  - iii. The audio body pack shall be synced to the vehicle's digital video camera system as part of the officer's daily initial preparation of the camera system for use. The officer must also sync the audio body pack to the recording system anytime the connection is lost.
- c. Body Worn Camera Procedures
- All officers assigned a BWC must wear the camera while working extra-duty jobs. The camera systems must be fully charged at the beginning of the officer's tour of duty. The operator must also ensure the date and time stamp are properly calibrated. Only departmental-issued cameras are approved for use by departmental personnel. BWCs may only be used officially; all other use is prohibited.

Video data recorded on the body-worn cameras must be classified by the officer assigned to the camera. The case number of the event will classify each file, or if no case number is assigned, the video will be classified by the six-digit date and the officer's last name. If more than one video is generated by the same officer on the same date, not assigned a case number, the date will be followed by a letter beginning with a, then b, and so on (example: 070212a Smith, 070212b Smith, etc.).

- i. Video data recorded and classified by the assigned officer will be transferred and stored as specified by the College Chief of Police. After all the data is transferred to the computer system, it will be erased from the body-worn cameras. If an officer discovers a citizen failed to record, the failure will be documented in the associated report (incident report, accident report, etc.). Video data should be transferred daily. Each officer must download all data before the end of each work rotation.
- ii. Officers will not attempt to change or delete video data recorded on any portable video camera system that has not been adequately transferred and stored.
- iii. No personnel may delete any photograph or recording transferred to secure storage outside of the retention schedules listed in this policy without permission of the Chief of Police.

- iv. Stored video recordings needed for court or other purposes, as approved by the Chief of Police, may be released by the Chief of Police or their designee. Officers will follow standard courtroom evidence procedures regarding the recordings. If the recording is not retained as evidence by court personnel, it shall be placed in the original case file and returned to the Support Division.
    - (a) All procedures outlined in this policy also apply to the use of the recording devices by civilian employees of all TCSG Law Enforcement Agencies.
  - v. All enforcement personnel will receive training on using and properly wearing the body-worn cameras during either the FTO training program or the new hire training phase. In addition, all newly promoted supervisors tasked with downloading recordings will receive training on the administrative use of the recordings.
- d. **Review of Digital Recordings**  
 The Chief of Police or designee will periodically, but at least annually, review both Mobile Video Cameras and Body Worn Cameras footage to determine compliance with policy and training. The review aims to focus on officer actions that indicate non-compliance to training, lack of training, improper supervision, or policy non-compliance. **(GLECP 1.22c)** The review will be documented in a memo to the Chief of Police if performed by a designee. If the Chief of Police performs the review, a Memo to File will be created summarizing the review and any actions taken. **(GLECP 1.22f)**
- e. **Digital Video Evidence Control and Management**  
 All sworn personnel will utilize strict control of their digital recording equipment as outlined below:
- f. **Classification and Retention Schedule (GLECP 1.22d)**  
 All data will be retained per the State of Georgia Retention Schedule, which can be found online at:  
[www.georgiaarchives.org/records/state\\_government](http://www.georgiaarchives.org/records/state_government)  
 HB 976 – 2016 Legislative session modifies the retention schedule for law enforcement surveillance cameras, body-worn cameras, and in-car cameras. The bill mandates retention for 180 days except when such recordings capture; an arrest, use of force by an officer, or vehicular accident, which must be stored for 30 months. The recording must be kept through final adjudication if there are other investigations or pending litigation. Local governments nor law enforcement agencies will have the duty to redact or obscure people or objects in the recording and shall not bare any civil liability for such depictions.
- i. Officers will be required to choose a classification that most closely corresponds with each recorded incident when the recording is stopped. The classifying officer shall also document the unique agency-issued case number, where applicable, within the designated data field and the code response in the Notes field if the response was an emergency response. All officers on the scene of an event will code their videos the same, even if the

officer is not the primary officer. These classifications determine the retention schedule for the video. The videos will be classified as follows:

- ii. **PHYSICAL ARREST**- Any recorded action by primary or backup officers that result in an arrest. All officers on the scene will code their videos as "PHYSICAL ARREST." Additionally, all use of force incidents will be recorded under "PHYSICAL ARREST."
- iii. **PURSUIT** - Any recorded action by primary or backup officers involved in a pursuit or engaged in a support role during a pursuit.
- iv. **MISC/ACCIDENTAL** -Any recorded action by primary or backup officers resulting from a dispatched call, self-initiated call, or security check that does not result in an arrest or is not part of a criminal investigation.
- v. **INCIDENT REPORT** - Any recorded action by an officer that involves a criminal investigation.
- vi. **FIELD INTERVIEW** - Any recorded action by an officer that may not be needed for immediate review but has a high probability of containing incriminating evidence. For example, Field Interviews of suspicious person(s) and recorded interviews that may result in or support criminal charges.
- vii. **TRAFFIC** - Any recorded action by primary or backup officers where a traffic citation is issued. If a citation is issued during an arrest, the officer will use the event code that is most appropriate, e.g., "PHYSICAL ARREST" or "PURSUIT."
- viii. **MOTOR VEHICLE ACCIDENT** - Any recorded action by primary or backup officers during a motor vehicle accident investigation.
- ix. **ARCHIVED VIDEOS** - Videos designated for this classification may include preliminary and follow-up investigations associated with any homicide, Use of Force with severe injury or death, Vehicle Pursuit with serious injury or death, or other recorded incidents as determined by the department's administration. No officer shall classify a video with this designation. Instead, the officer shall utilize a classification described above. The Chief of Police or designee assumes responsibility for using the "Archived Videos" classification.
- x. Officers requiring video to be retained longer than the abovementioned retention times will submit a video archive request in writing to the Chief of Police or designee, noting the reason for the increased retention time. Video with this classification will be removed once authorized by the Chief of Police.

## B. Personally Owned Electronic Devices (**GLECP 1.21 and 1.22**)

### 1. Policy

All employees of each TCSG Law Enforcement agency are prohibited from using personally owned electronic devices, including but not limited to cellular telephones, cameras, video recorders, or audio recorders, to capture photographs, video, or audio recordings in the performance of their official duties except with permission of the College Chief of Police. (**GLECP 1.21**)

Any video, audio, or photographs made or recorded in the performance of official duties by a TCSG Law Enforcement agency employee are the property of the TCSG Law Enforcement Agency, regardless of the owner of the device used to capture the images or recordings.

All recordings and images captured in the performance of official duties on personally owned electronic devices, used with the permission of the Chief of Police, are to be downloaded, saved, and archived in accordance with the procedures set forth earlier in this chapter for department-owned devices. **(GLECP 1.22d)** All recordings and images will be deleted or erased from the personally owned device immediately.

All recordings and images of any law enforcement-related action, including but not limited to images and recordings of accident or crime scenes, a victim of crime, witnesses to a crime, persons suspected of committing a crime, or law enforcement personnel, may not be published in any medium, whether digital or print, without permission of the College Chief of Police. This includes but is not limited to social media, blogs, websites, texting, video hosting, or other forms of electronic communication.

**SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS:  
GEORGIA LAW ENFORCEMENT CERTIFICATION PROGRAM (GLECP) STANDARDS  
INCLUDED: 1.21, 1.22 (a, b, c, d, e and f)**

**This policy is for the Law Enforcement Agencies of the Technical College System of Georgia use only and does not apply to any criminal or civil proceeding. The policy shall not be construed as creating a higher standard of safety or care in an evidentiary sense concerning third-party claims. Violations of this policy will form the basis for departmental administrative sanctions only. Violations of law will form the basis for civil and criminal sanctions in a recognized judicial setting.**