

COVINGTON POLICE DEPARTMENT STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

Subject: DIGITAL MOBILE VIDEO RECORDING EQUIPMENT

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I. Purpose

To establish uniform guidelines for the operation of digital video/audio recording equipment in patrol vehicles.

II. Statement of Policy

It shall be the policy of the Covington Police Department that officers will use digital mobile video recording (DMVR) equipment to record video and audio transactions, in their entirety, that occur between officers and the public as described in this directive.

Any portion of a video/audio recording that contains events surrounding a violation of the law (which includes a crime or offense prosecutable in the criminal courts in this State or the United States or an infraction) is considered a record of a pending criminal investigation or prosecution, as described in O.C.G.A. 50-18-72 (a)(4), and therefore not considered a public record.

III. Definitions

- A. Agency Administrator – Person(s) designated to oversee the DMVR system for the department (Evidence custodian and alternate evidence custodian).
- B. Bookmark – Officer can add specific notes and case number. Officers can add as many bookmarks as needed to a recording. Bookmarks are permanent.
- C. Chain of Custody Report – Report provided from the DMVR system to document all events that are associated with the case.
- D. Classify - Term used to signify the various methods (bookmarks, tags) an authorized user can classify an event that has been recorded and set retention period.
- E. Continuous Recording – The vehicle DMVR system is always on and recording, except when the vehicle has been turned off for more than a preset amount of time; however, the recording is not saved unless a trigger event occurs.
- F. DMVR – Digital Mobile Video Recording

- G. DVD Format – DMVR copy version in which the video and two separate audio channels are combined into one track and are capable of being played on a standard DVD drive.
- H. Manual Upload – In the event of a DMVR wireless outage or an excessive amount of recordings are stored on the memory card in the vehicle DMVR, the memory card may be removed by the system administrator and the recordings manually uploaded using the card reader in the police department.
- I. PC Format – DMVR copy version in which the video and the two separate audio channels can be played together or separately and shows patrol vehicle information. PC format allows viewer to access “bookmarks”.
- J. Pre-Event Recording – The vehicle DMVR system will retain the video recording made prior to a trigger event, up to 30 seconds, depending on system settings. Audio is not recorded until the trigger event occurs.
- K. Trigger Event – An event that causes the vehicle’s DMVR to begin recording.
- L. Wireless Upload – Each vehicle DMVR is assigned to the DMVR server located at the police department. When the police vehicle is within range of the wireless access point antennas installed at the police department, the recordings stored on the vehicle DMVR are automatically transferred over a wireless connection to the DMVR server.

IV. Procedures

- A. Officers will adhere to the procedures listed below when utilizing DMVR equipment.
 - 1. DMVR equipment installed in a vehicle is the responsibility of the officer assigned to that vehicle and will be maintained according to manufacturer's recommendations.
 - 2. Prior to and throughout each shift, officers will ensure that all components of their DMVR equipment are working satisfactorily and will immediately bring any problems to the attention of a supervisor.
 - 3. DMVR equipment activation
 - a. The DMVR equipment is automatically activated when the vehicle's emergency warning devices are in operation. When the event ends, the officer should manually stop the recording.
 - b. The DMVR equipment is automatically activated when the vehicle's emergency warning devices are in operation, and other trigger events occur such as a collision involving the police vehicle or exceeding a preset speed.
 - c. The equipment may be manually deactivated during non-enforcement activities, such as traffic control.
 - 4. Officers are encouraged to inform their supervisor of any recorded sequences that may be of value for training purposes.

5. When an incident has ended, the officer will stop the recording and select the appropriate bookmark to classify the recording.
 - a. traffic stop
 - b. traffic stop with arrest
 - c. aggressive response (would require Response to Aggression/Resistance form)
 - d. emergency response
 - e. deadly force
 - f. prisoner transport
 - g. custodial arrest
 - h. non-custodial interview (field interview)
 - i. pursuit
 - j. DUI
 - k. officer involved incident (incident that may require supervisory review)
 - l. general intelligence
 - m. 90 days
 - n. 2 years
 - o. 5 years
 - p. 5+ years (50 years)
 - q. blue light/mic test
 - r. recording mistake
6. The retention period for the video will be set based on the following criteria:

Classify Tag (Type of Event)	Retention Period
Traffic Stop	181 days
Traffic Stop with Arrest	5 years
Aggressive Response	721 days
Emergency Response	181 days
Deadly Force	5+ years
Prisoner Transport	181 days
Custodial Interview	181 days
F/I – Non-custodial Interview	181 days
Pursuit	2 years
DUI	5 years
Officer Involved Incident	721 days
General Intel	181 days
90 day retention	90 days
2 year retention	721 days
5 year retention	1826 days
5+ year retention	30000 days
Blue Lights/Mic Test	30 days
Recording Mistake	30 days

7. Officers must ensure non-police related electronic devices within the police vehicle (music radios, CD players, etc.) are turned off when the in-car audio system is activated. This does not apply to police radios. Other noise, such as wind or road noise from an open window should also be limited, if possible.
- B. Officers will ensure that DMVR equipment (both video and audio) is activated and operating properly and that the video recorder is positioned and adjusted to record events in the following circumstances:
1. Traffic Stops

Video and audio DMVR equipment will be used to record the entire duration of all traffic stops. Officers may manually activate DMVR equipment when following a vehicle that they intend to stop. DMVR equipment may be deactivated only after the traffic stop has ended and the violator or officer has left the scene.
 2. Pursuits

Video and audio DMVR equipment will be used to record the entire duration of a pursuit. All officers engaged in a pursuit will operate their DMVR equipment. All DMVR equipment will remain activated until the pursuit is terminated or when authorized by a supervisor. Reasonable efforts will be made to record all officer/suspect interaction in its entirety. Officers will continue to operate their DMVR equipment after termination of the pursuit if they are continuing to follow the suspect vehicle.

3. Aggressive Response

Video and audio DMVR equipment will be used to record the entire duration of an incident that involves an aggressive response on the part of the officer(s). Supplemental to the recording and incident report will be the Response to Aggression/Resistance form.

4. Emergency Response

Video and audio DMVR equipment will be used to record the entire duration of any emergency response. DMVR equipment will remain activated to record all officer contact with the public until the end of the emergency response. The equipment may be deactivated if the response is cancelled or as allowed in Section IV-A 3 of this directive.

5. Prisoner Transport

Video and audio DMVR equipment will be used during the entire duration of the transportation of any prisoner who:

- a. Is argumentative (at officer's discretion)
- b. Is combative
- c. Has been involved in a use of force
- d. Is injured or claims to be injured
- e. Officers may position the camera to record the actions of the prisoner.

C. Officers are encouraged to use their DMVR equipment to:

1. Record the reason for their current or planned enforcement action, such as DUI observations;
2. Record the actions and/or statements of suspects if the recording would prove useful in later judicial proceedings. For example: interviews, sobriety performance tests, while in custody, or during transportation;
3. Record the circumstances at crime and accident scenes or other events such as the confiscation and documentation of evidence or contraband;
4. Record the audio portion of a conversation with a citizen, when appropriate.

D. Officers will not attempt to erase, alter, or tamper with DMVR recordings. Officers will not mute the microphones. Normally, DMVR recorded video/audio is transferred wirelessly from the vehicle to the department server. However, if a manual transfer is necessary due to issues with the wireless transmission or there is more than 2 hours of stored recordings, the officer should contact a supervisor who will contact a system administrator to remove the DMVR memory card for manual transfer of the recording.

- E. Officers will ensure that the vehicle DMVR has an adequate amount of free recording space to complete their tour of duty. The in-vehicle monitor displays remaining space when not actively recording due to a trigger event.
- F. **Officers must logon to the DMVR application at the start of their tour of duty and remain logged into the application until their tour of duty has ended.** Logon procedures are as follows:
 - 1. Dock laptop
 - 2. Turn on body pack
 - 3. Sync body pack
 - a. Place body pack in cradle
 - b. Lights on body pack will flash
 - c. When lights stop flashing, body pack is synced
 - 4. Logging on to software
 - a. Double click on “front end” icon
 - b. Make sure the following items are filled in:
 - i. User id
 - ii. Name
 - iii. Password
 - iv. Unit number
 - v. Area (zone)
 - vi. Shift
 - vii. Agency
 - viii. Division
 - c. Click okay
- I. Officers will note in their offense, arrest, and related reports when video/audio recordings were made during the incident in question. In addition, the case number and any notes will be bookmarked in the DMVR. Note: officers will verify that a recording was in fact made when noting in the incident report. If the system did not capture a recording, the officer and his/her immediate supervisor will prepare a detailed report as to the malfunction.
- J. Field Training Officers will be responsible for training new officers in the operation of DMVR equipment and will document that training.
- K. Field Training Officers will use their login when training with DMVR.

V. Recording Control and Management

A. DMVR

1. Recordings may be duplicated for court, investigative, training, or other purposes authorized by the Chief of Police or his designee. Duplicate recordings will only be made by a system administrator.
 - a. The District Attorney's (DA) office requests for recordings must be made through one of the system administrators.
 - b. Copies of any DMVR recordings to be provided to the DA's office request will exclusively be and must be made in the PC Format only.
2. All recordings stored on the DMVR Server will be erased after the 90-day retention period, unless a longer retention period has been identified for court, investigative or other specific purposes (i.e. accreditation documentation).
3. Officers will be responsible for advising their supervisor of any recordings that they are not able to properly mark.
 - a. Officers will be responsible for advising their supervisor when a recording that they marked for extended retention is no longer needed.
 - b. The DMVR system automatically copies recordings to the DMVR Server once they have been marked for extended retention. This copying process occurs nightly.

VI. Notation and Significant Events

Officers who record events for which they later write a report will include in the report that a video recording was made of the event. If the times listed on the report differ in any way from the time the recording was made, the officer should include the time of the recording to simplify location of the event.

VII. Transmittal, Transfer or Transportation of Digital Recordings

- A. All DMVR recordings will remain the property of the Covington Police Department and may only be used as outlined below.
- B. Recorded events may be duplicated or released to the following:
 1. District Attorney's Office — upon the request of prosecutors or other authorized court official.
 2. Newton County Superior, Magistrate, Juvenile or Municipal Courts — upon the request of any judge or authorized court official.
 3. Covington Police Department Training Section — upon the request of the training coordinator.
 4. Covington Police Department supervisory personnel — with any legitimate investigative or supervisory need.

5. Any other individual or organization with a demonstrated need will follow clearly established guidelines as set forth by the State of Georgia for open records requests or upon the approval of the Chief of Police. In no case will an incident pending prosecution in any court be released without the approval of the prosecutor assigned to the case.
6. Under no circumstances shall any officer make copies of the recordings for his/her personal use.

This SOP supersedes any SOP previously issued.

BY ORDER OF THE CHIEF OF POLICE:

Stacey L. Cotton

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Chief of Police