



CONSERVING THE PEACE THROUGH VALUES DRIVEN SERVICE / SHERIFF PAT GARRETT

Body Worn Camera (BWC) Program Fact Sheet

Body Worn Cameras have been understood as an important improvement in police transparency, evidence gathering, the ability to showcase good public safety work, and provide a check on police conduct. The Sheriff's Office also recognizes these cameras can also raise public privacy concerns. The Oregon Legislature paved the way for use of the technology when, in 2015, legislators passed House Bill 2571 to clarify Oregon laws about body worn camera records, to include retention and disclosure. The Washington County Sheriff's Office (WCSO) began a BWC pilot in 2017. Finding the technology helpful to community safety, particularly to policing transparency, the Sheriff's Office planned full deployment. However, full Patrol deployment required significant additional funding to resource BWC equipment, uniform modifications, deputy training, video storage, and meet retention and disclosure requirements consistent with Oregon law. During the May 2020 budget hearing Sheriff Garrett informed commissioners that even though BWC funding for greater deployment had been cut from the original budget request, the Sheriff intended to continue wider deployment which could result in lower end-of-year fund balance. The Sheriff explained continued program momentum is important to fulfill the program's goal of full implementation. Sheriff Garrett is thankful to commissioners for their work after the budget hearing to appropriate additional funding for full deployment. The Sheriff is also grateful and supportive to the commissioners withholding their approval to expend the funds until the community is able to provide input during the summer.

The Sheriff and Sheriff's Office understands the community ultimately decides how public safety services are provided. While the Sheriff continues to support the BWC program, Sheriff Garrett looks forward to better understanding from our community whether the program is supported and will honor the community's input.

Objectives

- Enhancing public trust by preserving factual representations of deputy interactions with the community in the form of video and audio recordings.
- Recording certain activities and creating a visual and audio record to supplement a deputy's report.
- Enhancing the deputy's ability to document and review statements and actions for accuracy and consistency for both internal reporting requirements and courtroom preparation and presentation.
- Preserving visual and audio information for use in current and future investigations.
- Providing an impartial measurement for self-critique and field evaluation during officer training.
- Promoting officer safety.

History

- 2016 – As a result of community interest to deploy a BWC system as a significant evolution in public safety transparency, the Sheriff favored implementation for uniform personnel in the Patrol Division.
- 2017 – Research and grant funding secured. Request for proposals (RFP) initiated with 10 vendors and then narrowed down to three: Axon, Utility, and Motorola. There was a six-week field test with each vendor involving 10 deputies. From that field test, Utility was selected.
- 2018 – RFP was awarded to Utility in January 2018. While not part of the RFP, Utility is the only BWC system endorsed by the national NAACP.
- 2018 – WCSO begins a pilot project with the deployment of 30 BWCs: Traffic Safety Unit deputies, and volunteers from the Patrol Division.
- 2020 – WCSO in negotiations to enter a five-year contract with Utility to provide full Patrol-wide deployment of BWC among uniform personnel.

Implementation

Patrol-wide implementation to begin as funding is approved. Uniform alterations will start with groups of about ten deputies who will be issued new and/or altered uniforms, BWC gear, and be provided requisite training. If funding is secured, we anticipate all projected BWC technology will be installed in vehicles by the end of 2022.