

LITTLETON POLICE DEPARTMENT

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PROCEDURE #: 15-2

**SUBJECT: In-Car Camera System and Mobile Video Recorder
(MVR)**

Statutory Authority: RSA 595-A, RSA 91-A, RSA 570-A

NOTE: This written directive is for the internal governance of the Littleton Police Department, and as provided by RSA 516:36, is not intended and should not be interpreted to establish a higher standard of care in any civil or criminal action than would otherwise be applicable under existing law.

Date of issue
04-20-2015

Issuing Authority
Chief Paul Smith

Effective Date
04-20-2015

Distribution
All

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide officers of the Littleton Police Department with guidelines for the use, management, storage, and retrieval of audio-visual media recorded by in-car video systems.

II. DEFINITIONS

Recorded media: Refers to audio-video signals recorded on any of several storage devices, including digital (SD, Flash or Micro SD), hard drive, or other portable digital storage devices.

In-Car Camera System and Mobile Video Recorder (MVR): These are synonymous terms and refer to any system that captures audio and video signals capable of installation in a vehicle, and that includes at minimum, a camera, microphone, recorder, and monitor.

Supervisor: Sworn personnel officially appointed responsibility for a departmental component.

MVR Technician: Personnel trained in the operational use and repair of MVRs, duplicating methods, storage and retrieval methods and procedures, and who possess a working knowledge of video forensics and evidentiary procedures. (Dependent on the size and needs of the agency, the role of the MVR Technician may be delegated to a supervisor, IT, or properly trained department personnel).

Degaussing: Electronic cleansing of analog recording media returns the media to its original state and when it is ready for the imprinting of new images.

III. POLICY

The use of an MVR system provides persuasive documentary evidence and helps defend against civil litigation and allegations of officer misconduct. Officers assigned the use of these devices shall adhere to the operational objectives and protocols outlined herein so as to maximize the effectiveness and utility of the MVR and the integrity of evidence and related video documentation.

IV. PROCEDURES

A. Program Objectives

The department has adopted the use of MVRs to accomplish the following objectives:

1. To enhance officer safety.
2. To accurately capture statements and events during the course of an incident.
3. To enhance the officer's ability to document and review statements and actions for both internal reporting requirements and for courtroom preparation/presentation.
4. To provide an impartial measurement for self-critique and field evaluation during recruitment and new officer training.
5. To capture visual and audio information for use in current and future investigations.

B. General Procedures

1. It shall be the responsibility of this department to ensure that the audio-video recording equipment is properly installed according to the manufacturer's recommendations.
 - a. MVR equipment shall automatically activate when emergency equipment (lights) or a wireless transmitter is operating. The system may also be activated manually from the control panel affixed to the interior of the vehicle.
 - b. Placement and operation of system components within the vehicle shall be based on officer safety requirements.
 - c. All officers shall successfully complete this department's approved course of instruction prior to being deployed with MVR systems in operational settings.

C. Officers' Responsibilities

1. Inspection and general maintenance of MVR equipment installed in departmental vehicles shall be the responsibility of the officer assigned to the vehicle.
 - a. MVR equipment shall be operated in accordance with the manufacturer's recommended guidelines and departmental training and policies.
 - b. Prior to beginning each shift, the assigned officer shall perform an inspection to ensure that the MVR is performing in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations covering the following matters.
 - (1) Remote Audio Transmitter functional:
 - Adequate power source
 - Connected to the recording equipment
 - Remote activation of system via transmitter
 - (2) Camera Lens:
 - Windshield and camera lens free of debris

- Camera facing intended direction
- (3) Recording mechanism capturing both audio and video information:
 - System plays back both audio and video tracks
- 2. Malfunctions, damage or theft of in-car camera equipment shall be reported to the immediate supervisor prior to placing the unit into service.
 - a. A subsequent written report shall include information on the suspected cause(s) of equipment failure, as available, and any recommendations for corrective action.
 - b. The supervisor shall determine if the unit shall be placed in service. If the vehicle is placed in service without an operating MVR, the Chief of Police or h/her designee shall be informed.

D. Mandatory Recordation

1. Traffic stops (to include, but not limited to traffic violations, stranded motorist assistance and all crime interdiction stops)
2. Priority responses
3. Vehicle pursuits
4. Prisoner transports
5. Crimes in progress
6. Any situation or incident that the officer, through training and experience, believes should be audibly and visually recorded.
7. When the MVR is activated, officers shall ensure that the audio portion is also activated so all events are properly documented. Officers are encouraged to narrate events using the audio recording, so as to provide the best documentation for pretrial and courtroom presentation.
 - a. *Officers shall inform individuals that they are being, "Audio and video recorded".*
 - b. *In addition to the aforementioned incidents, officers may record with the audio portion disabled anytime the officer believes such recording has a legitimate law enforcement purpose. Officers may audibly and visually record any incident in which all involved parties consent. At the beginning of any public contact or traffic stop, the officer shall notify the citizen that the events are being audibly and visually recorded. This notification does not apply to crimes in progress or similar situations where notification is impractical.*

E. Operational Protocols

1. Officers using the 900Mhz digital transmitters that are individually synchronized to their individual MVR shall activate both audio and video recordings when responding in a support capacity in order to obtain additional perspectives of the incident scene.
2. Officers may review the recordings when preparing written reports of events to help ensure accuracy and consistency of accounts.

3. With the exception of police radios, officers shall ensure that the volume from other electronic devices within the police vehicle does not interfere with MVR recordings.
4. Officers shall not erase, alter, reuse, modify or tamper with MVR recordings. Only a supervisor or MVR technician may erase and reissue previously recorded recordings and may only do so pursuant to the provisions of this policy.
5. To prevent damage, original recordings shall not be viewed in any equipment other than the equipment issued or authorized by the MVR technician.
6. MVR recordings shall be marked and/or duplicated for criminal prosecution when they record any of the following.
 - a. Arrests
 - b. Assaults
 - c. Physical or verbal confrontations, vehicle pursuits
 - d. Vehicle searches in which contraband is recovered
 - e. Driving while intoxicated or under the influence arrests
 - f. All prisoner transports
7. When the MVR is activated to document an event, it shall not be deactivated until the event has been concluded unless
 - a. the incident or event is of such duration that the MVR may be deactivated to conserve recording times; and
 - b. the officer does not reasonably believe that deactivation will result in the loss of critical documentary information; and
 - c. the intention to stop the recording has been noted by the officer either verbally or in a written notation.

F. Supervisors' Responsibilities

1. Supervisors shall issue unrecorded media and when possible prior to issuance, shall assign and affix an identification number to the exterior of the media.
 - a. The numbered media is then recorded in the chain of custody log.
 - b. Should the media be a computer hard drive or downloaded wirelessly, a computer generated file number shall be generated internally.
2. When an incident arises that requires the immediate retrieval of the recorded media (e.g., serious crime scenes, departmental shootings, departmental accidents), a supervisor shall respond to the scene and ensure that the appropriate MVR technician or crime scene investigator removes the recorded media.
 - a. The technician or investigator shall then
 - (1) place the media into evidence and provide copies to authorized investigative personnel; and
 - (2) ensure the appropriate notation is made in the chain of custody log
3. The supervisor shall periodically review the chain of custody log to ensure that issued media is surrendered in a timely manner. The supervisor is responsible for determining causes for such problems (e.g., unreported problems with the MVR equipment or equipment not being used in accordance with departmental policy).
4. Supervisors who are informed or otherwise become aware of malfunctioning equipment shall ensure that authorized personnel make repairs in a timely manner.

5. Supervisors shall conduct periodic reviews of officer assigned media in order to periodically
 - a. assess officer performance;
 - b. assure proper functioning of MVR equipment;
 - c. determine if MVR equipment is being operated properly; and
 - d. identify recordings that may be appropriate for training.
6. Supervisors shall conduct frequent reviews of personnel who are newly assigned MVR equipment in order to ensure compliance with departmental policy. Supervisors shall thereafter conduct quarterly reviews.
7. Minor infractions (not criminal in nature) discovered during the routine review of recorded material should be viewed as training opportunities and not as routine disciplinary actions. Should the behavior or action become habitual after being informally addressed, the appropriate disciplinary or corrective action shall be taken.
8. Supervisor shall ensure that adequate recording media is on hand and available for issuance.
9. The Field Training Program supervisor shall, on a regular basis, review MVR video of recruit trainees during their FTEP training program. Training issues, guidance or other pertinent information gathered during the MVR review shall be brought to the FTO assigned to the trainee for consideration and action as deemed necessary.

G. Technicians' Responsibilities

1. A designated officer or other employee (MVR technician) shall be responsible for the retrieval, storage, and duplication of all recorded media.
2. Recorded media may only be erased:
 - a. pursuant to a court order; or
 - b. in accordance with established retention guidelines.
3. The MVR technician shall be responsible for the following.
 - a. Long-term storage of media deemed to be of evidentiary value consistent with the department's evidence storage protocols and retention schedule.
 - b. The cleansing (degaussing) and re-issuance of all other media deemed to be of no evidentiary value consistent with the department's document retention requirements.

H. Storage

1. All files shall be securely downloaded periodically and no later than the end of each shift. Each file shall contain information related to the date, MVR identifier, and assigned officer.
2. All images and sounds recorded by the MVR are the exclusive property of this department. Accessing, copying, or releasing files for non-law enforcement purposes is strictly prohibited.
3. All access to MVR data (images, sounds, and metadata) must be specifically authorized by the Chief of Police or his or her designee, and all access is to be audited to ensure that only authorized users are accessing the data for legitimate and authorized purposes.

4. Files should be securely stored in accordance with state records retention laws and no longer than useful for purposes of training or for use in an investigation or prosecution.

I. Media Duplication

1. All recording media, recorded images and audio recordings are the property of this department. Dissemination outside of the agency is strictly prohibited without specific written authorization of the Chief of Police or his or her designee.
2. To prevent damage to, or alteration of, the original recorded media, it shall not be copied, viewed or otherwise inserted into any device not approved by the departmental MVR technician or IT staff.
3. When possible and practical, a copy of the original media shall be used for viewing by investigators, staff, training personnel, and the courts (unless otherwise directed by the courts) to preserve the original media in pristine condition.
4. At the conclusion of the trial proceedings or as otherwise authorized by the prosecutor's office for which the media was required, all copies shall be submitted to the MVR technician for further storage or destruction.

Sources

IACP
RSA 91-A
RSA 595-A
RSA 570-A

Re-written By

Chief Paul J. Smith

Reviewed Date

04-20-2015

Revised

04-20-2015

Authorized By:

Paul Smith
Chief of Police