


PBP FORM 290  PITTSBURGH BUREAU OF POLICE <i>"...accountability, integrity and respect."</i>		SUBJECT: "PICTURES, VIDEOS, AND AUDIO RECORDINGS OF POLICE OFFICERS WHILE PERFORMING OFFICIAL FUNCTIONS IN PUBLIC SPACES"		ORDER NUMBER: 69-5
		PLEAC STANDARD: NONE		PAGE 1 OF 4
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1.0 PURPOSE

1.1 This policy provides officers with guidance for dealing with situations in which they are being recorded, to include videotaping, audiotaping, or both, by members of the public or the media.

2.0 POLICY

2.1 Members of the public, including media representatives, have an unambiguous First Amendment right to record officers in public places, as long as their actions do not interfere with the officer's duties or the safety of officers or others. Officers should assume that they are being recorded at all times when on duty.

2.2 To protect the constitutional rights of individuals to record police officers engaged in the public discharge of their duties by providing clear guidelines and expectations for all sworn members while conducting official business or while acting in an official capacity.

2.3 Private individuals have a First amendment right to observe and record police officers engaged in public discharge of their duties. It has been determined that observing, gathering and disseminating information of a public concern, such as recordings of police officers engaged in public duties, is a form of free speech guaranteed by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution.

2.4 While recording police action is a form of free speech, not all speech is protected by the first Amendment. Individuals do not have the right to record police officers if, by doing so, they jeopardize the safety of the officers, suspects, or other individuals in the immediate vicinity, violate law, incite others to violate law or actually obstruct or interferes with a police officer conducting any official duties or functions.

3.0 DEFINITIONS

3.1 Media— anything on or in which information or images may be stored such as, photographs, photographic negatives, audio tapes, video tapes, computer hard drives, sim, cards, and digital memory cards.

3.2 Recording Devices- any instrument capable of recording information or images such as cameras, video cameras, smart phones, tablets, computers, and tape recorders.

4.0 PATROL PROCEDURES

4.1 Members shall not deliberately interfere with or obstruct any member or members of the general public from photographing, videotaping, or audibly recording police personnel while conducting official business.

4.1.1 Under extraordinary circumstances, police personnel may impede or block an individual from recording police personnel if engaged in the public discharge of their duties, but only when the recording individual engages in actions

that jeopardize the safety of the officers, any suspects or other individuals in the immediate vicinity, violate law, incite others to violate the law or actually obstructs or interferes with an officer's official duties or functions. The mere recording of a police officer's actions does not alone constitute an officer safety or obstruction issue. Officers must be prepared to clearly articulate how the action of the individual recording the incident created an unsafe environment and/or actually obstructed or interfere with an officer's official duties. Officers shall request a supervisor respond to the scene if they impede or block an individual from recording their actions.

4.1.2. Police personnel shall not threaten, intimidate, or otherwise discourage an individual from photographing, videotaping, or audibly recording personnel while conducting official business in any public space.

4.3 Under no circumstances shall any recording device being used to record police personnel be intentionally damaged or destroyed or may any media, such as memory cards or sticks, within such recording devices be damaged, destroyed, or deleted. If accidental damages occur to such property by police personnel during the course of official duties, the procedures shall be documented in a 3.0- Investigative report.

4.3.1. Officers should be aware that the seizure or destruction of such recording devices or media without a search warrant or due process is a constitutional violation and officers may be sued and subjected to both compensatory and punitive damages.

4.4 If while conducting official business or while acting in an official capacity in a public space, and an individual or individuals recording the police become confrontational, provoking, or otherwise antagonistic towards the officers, police personnel shall, if safe do so, call for a supervisor to the location before any restrictive police actions are taken.

4.5 If while conducting official business or while in an official capacity in a public space, the conduct of an individual recording the police violates the law, incites others to violate the law, and/or jeopardizes the safety of an office, suspects or other persons in the immediate vicinity, police personnel shall:

4.5.1 Order the individual to move to an area that does not jeopardize the safety of the officer, the suspect or others in the immediate vicinity, or interferes with police activities.

4.5.2 If the individual refuses to move, take necessary actions to ensure officer safety, the safety of the suspect (s) and other individuals in the immediate vicinity.

4.5.3 If the interference/obstruction being created continues to "obstruct, impair or prevent the administration of law or other governmental function by force, violence, physical interference or obstacle or any other lawful act", at a minimum, reasonable suspicion exists to detain the individual for 18 Pa.C.S. §, 5101, Obstructing the Administration of Law or Other Governmental Function.

4.5.4 The mere fact that an individual has been detained or even arrested for this offense does not automatically establish probable cause to seize and search any recording devices the individual possesses. This property shall be secured with all other property during the investigation, but not viewed or searched by the officer.

4.5.5 Contact communications to have a supervisor dispatched to the scene.

4.5.6 If after consulting with the supervisor and probable cause exists to arrest the individual for 18 Pa.C.S. §, 5101, the individual may be arrested. However, if the officer reasonably believes the individual will cease any further interference or obstructions, the officer shall have the discretion to release the individual. A complete investigative report 3.0 should be done.

4.5.7 If an arrest is made and the officer has probable cause to believe the recording device contains evidence of a crime, including the crime for which the individual was arrested, the officer shall secure the property in accordance Section 36-1 Evidence Procedures.

4.5.8 If there no exigency to immediately view the media, it shall not be viewed until a search warrant has been obtained.

4.6 If police personnel reasonably believe that a member of the general public has recorded any evidence of a crime in progress or other evidence of a crime:

4.6.1 The person who has recorded the evidence shall be requested to transfer the recording device or media to police custody or permit a copy of the media/evidence be made by the Police Department.

4.6.2 Any recording devices or media taken into custody shall be returned as soon as practical.

4.6.3 Police Department personnel shall not copy and/or disseminate any information or images from such devices or media that is not evidence of a crime or otherwise required for an official departmental purpose.

4.6.4 An investigative report shall be completed documenting the facts and circumstances, including the consent to transfer the recording device or media from the owner to police. Every effort should be made to have the owner sign a Search and Seizure form (Form 5).

4.6.5 The Computer Crime Unit shall be notified and advised that evidence may exist on a recording device and/or media and that the evidence was voluntarily provided to police.

4.7 If police personnel have probable cause to believe that a member of the general public has recorded any evidence of a crime in progress or other evidence of a crime and the individual refuses to voluntarily transfer the recording device or media to police custody or permit a copy of the media/evidence to be made and police reasonably believe such evidence will be permanently lost without immediate action:

4.7.1 Police personnel should temporarily seize the recording device and/or media to immediately preserve the evidence and call for supervisor to the location.

4.7.2 All facts and circumstances relating to the probable cause and exigency to seize the evidence shall be documented on an Investigative Report.

4.7.3 If the seizure is approved by the responding supervisor, the recording device and/or media will be packaged and sent to the property room in accordance to Section 36-1 Evidence Procedures.

4.7.4 If there is no exigency or immediate law enforcement need to view the recording device and/or media, it shall not be viewed until a search warrant or court order has been obtained.

4.7.5 Police Department personnel shall not copy and/or disseminate any information or images from such devices or media that is not evidence of a crime or otherwise required from any official departmental purpose.

5.0 SUPERVISOR PROCEDURE

5.1 A supervisor shall respond to the scene where any individual recording police officers engaged in public discharge of their duties.

5.1.1 Has become confrontational, provoking, or otherwise antagonistic towards the officers,

5.1.2 May possess evidentiary material,

5.1.3 Where a recording or recording device was seized by officers based upon probable cause, or

5.1.4 Where the recording individual has jeopardized the safety of the officer, the suspect or others in the immediate vicinity, violated the law, incited others to violate the law, or actually obstructed an officers official duties and restrictive actions were taken.

5.2 Once on scene, the supervisor shall:

- 5.2.1 Consult with the on scene officers and gather all available facts.
- 5.2.2 Attempt to de-escalate or otherwise intercede to prevent the incident from escalating (CIT Officers, who are trained in de-escalation techniques, can be used to support de-escalation efforts.)
- 5.2.3 If restrictive action was necessary by the officer prior to the supervisor's arrival, review the facts and circumstances to determine if the restrictive actions taken were the reasonable and necessary under the circumstances and whether they should continue.
- 5.2.4 Review the probable cause of any arrests made by officers. If probable cause to arrest does not exist, have the individual released and ensure the officer completed an accurate Investigative (3.0 Form).
- 5.2.5 If responding to the scene because police have probable cause to believe that a member of the general public has recorded evidence of a crime in progress or other evidence of a crime and the individual refuses to voluntarily transfer the recording device or media to police custody or permit a copy of the media/evidence to be made and police reasonably believe such evidence will be permanently lost without immediate action, the supervisor shall:
- 5.2.6 Consult with the seizing officer and review facts and circumstances surrounding the probable cause and exigency to seize the recording device and/or media without a warrant. If the seizure was proper, the supervisor shall advise the seizing officer to handle the recording device and/or media storage consistent with policies .
- 5.2.7 If there is no immediate law enforcement need to view the recording device and/or media, ensure the recording device and/or media is not viewed by patrol officers until a search warrant has been obtained.
- 5.2.8 If the immediate seizure was not based upon probable cause and there is no legitimate fear the evidence would be lost, the recording device and/or media shall be immediately returned to the owner.
- 5.2.9 If responding to a scene where any media or recording device was voluntarily provided to the police, the supervisor shall review the circumstances of any consent provided confirming that the consent to search was made voluntarily and that the proper documentation of such consent was completed by the officer (Search and Seizure Form 5).
- 5.2.10 Ensure officers do not copy and/or disseminate any information or images from seized or provided devices or media that are not evidence of a crime or otherwise required for any official departmental purpose.

Approved By:



Cameron McLay
Chief of Police